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Comments and Announcements

Some of the articles in this volume advance views that are similar, though the line of argument followed differs markedly. Thus John W. Mahon's "Providential Visitations in *Hamlet*" in its conclusion, "[Hamlet] achieves his mission once he recognizes the role of Providence," agrees with that of Ghanshiam Sharma's "The Function of Horatio in *Hamlet*," "And divinity, it would seem, does finally shape his ends though Hamlet has inadvertently rough-hewn them all along." But whereas Sharma sees Fortinbras as "that other noble survivor" whose ascension to the throne ensures that "the post-*Hamlet* Denmark of the play is [now] in better hands," for Rüdigar Imhof Fortinbras "imitates the actions of a tiger in times of peace; he lacks modest stillness and humility."

Each interpreter of course is trying to persuade us through argument, scholarship, and rhetoric that his view is the most plausible. How can we ever know whether Fortinbras proved himself a good king of Denmark or not? True, he has Hamlet's vote ("he has my dying voice") a point in Fortinbras's favour, but is Hamlet's opinion always trustworthy? Dr. Johnson felt uncomfortable at Hamlet's defence of his conduct in having wrong'd Laertes (5.2.221ff):

> I wish Hamlet had made some other defence; it is unsuitable to the character of a good or a brave man, to shelter himself in falsehood.

Perhaps it is important for each reader to believe that there is (for him/her) one interpretation that is the correct one, while admitting the validity of multiple interpretations of the text. Whereas such multiplicity can, and ought to, exist, it can be argued that for any particular reader a single interpretation should seem more valid than all the others. A reader without a point of view could well be likened to Polonius or Osric, both of whom Hamlet ridicules through word-play containing irony and innuendo. After *The Murder of Gonzago*, Hamlet has the following exchange with the former:

> *Ham.* Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?
> *Pol.* By th' mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed.
> *Ham.* Methinks it is like a weasel.
> *Pol.* It is back'd like a weasel.
> *Ham.* Or like a whale?
> *Pol.* Very like a whale.

and with the latter, a little before the fencing match:

> *Ham.* . . . Put your bonnet to his right use; 'tis for the head.
> *Osr.* I thank your lordship; it is very hot.
> *Ham.* No, believe me, 'tis very cold; the wind is northerly.
> *Osr.* It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.
> *Ham.* But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot for my complexion.
> *Osr.* Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry . . .

The two remaining articles in this volume cross and re-cross the boundary lines between comparative and influence-studies. Yoshiko Kawachi shows how the play has undergone numerous mutations in Japan; how various novelists have moulded the play into something, if not always rich, then certainly strange, even as Shakespeare transformed the original Amleth story into a work that was meant for the enlightenment of "th' yet unknowing world." S. Homchaudhuri's article is a comparative study of *Hamlet* and *Samson Agonistes*, works that on the surface might seem to have little in common, but on a deeper level show some striking resemblances.

* * *

The Shakespeare Newsletter, ed. Louis Marder, is engaged in computerizing all Shakespeare scholarship for easy universal access. "Shakespeare scholarship" includes work on the general subject of Shakespeare's plays and poems, the teaching of Shakespeare, Shakespeare's plays on-stage, Shakespeare's works in translation, etc. Scholars in India engaged in the above areas of study are invited to send full bibliographic and descriptive details to The Secretary, The Shakespeare Society of India, C-2/117 Janakpuri, New Delhi 110 058 for inclusion in the Shakespeare Data Bank.

R.W.D.

Fortinbras Ante Portas: The Role and Significance of Fortinbras in *Hamlet*

RUDIGER IMHOF

Young Fortinbras, some hold, is quite a marginal character in *Hamlet*, outdone in marginality only by Francisco, Osric, Barnardo, and Marcellus. The stage-history of the play has seen, surprisingly, many productions that consider him even less important than them. For while these have kept Osric, if only for the comic effect emanating from this "waterfly," as well as Francisco, Barnardo, and Marcellus because of their obvious dramatic function in 1.1, 1.4, and 1.5, they have chosen to omit Fortinbras's last-minute entrance at the end of the play, or, what is more, have even cut his brief appearance and the couple of lines about his Polish campaign in Act 4, thus robbing the piece of the *raison d'être* for Hamlet's "How all occasions" soliloquy. But then there are enough critics who believe that this soliloquy is superfluous anyway, as it merely echoes the thoughts Hamlet expresses in "To be, or not to be."[1] Quite a few see a corroboration of their belief in the fact that the Folio text does not contain this speech at all. Yet despite his alleged marginality, there is reason to contend that Fortinbras is not only an interesting, but a dramatically as well as thematically significant, though controversial, figure. This essay proposes to appraise the significance of Fortinbras by, first, surveying the main ideas as put forward by some of the critics of *Hamlet*, and then by reconsidering his part in the events at Elsinore and suggesting ways of transcending what would seem too narrow an approach as adopted in *Hamlet*-criticism so far.

That the approach has been too narrow and neglectful of important data becomes apparent if one reviews the main trends in the critical reception of the Prince of Norway. The view most commonly propounded is that his dramatic purpose, like that of Laertes and Pyrrhus, is essentially to serve as a foil to Hamlet. But before expounding this notion in some detail, one had better point out that Fortinbras-criticism is, largely, characterised by either an overemphasis or a total neglect of Fortinbras's dramatic significance. Francis Berry for instance, in one of the two studies which so far seem to have been devoted to Fortinbras,[2] has noted this neglect, which finds theatrical expression for example in the German play *Der bestrafte Brudermord*, where the diplomatic business between Denmark and Norway and Fortinbras's passage through the land are cut out entirely; Hamlet has been made King of Norway by his uncle, and as he is dying he asks Horatio to take the crown to Fortinbras, his cousin, who has not been mentioned before.[3] Goethe has the eponymous hero of his *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* suggest omitting the 'external' relations regarding Norway as compositional errors which "injure exceedingly the unity of the piece."[4] J.K. Walton, in his generally disappointing analysis of the structure of *Hamlet*,[5] does not consider it in any way essential to the design of the play that someone like Fortinbras should be made king at the end: there is not one word of comment on the matter. It is quite symptomatic of the critical neglect of the Prince of Norway that in the whole of Dover Wilson's incontestably admirable book *What Happens in 'Hamlet'*, Fortinbras is referred to on only four occasions, in one or two lines. Likewise in the section of his *Prefaces to Shakespeare* where Granville-Barker deals with the characters in *Hamlet*, there is no mention whatsoever of young Fortinbras.

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[1] Cf. for instance Eleanor Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*. 2nd. ed, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), pp. 207ff. For the contrary view see Max Deutschbein, "Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' und Montaigne," repr. in Willi Erzgräber (ed.), *Hamlet-Interpretationen* (Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft, 1977). pp. 241 ff.

If these are instances of neglect, Jean Paris's ideas can aptly serve as an example of an overemphasis of Fortinbras's significance. Paris maintains, somewhat surprisingly perhaps, that *Hamlet* is really about Fortinbras.[6] One of the three 'riddles' Paris has elected to see in the play concerns the issue of why Hamlet does not become king at the end, and why, with his dying breath, he nominates Fortinbras as the rightful successor to the Danish throne.[7] The solution to this 'riddle', as submitted by Paris, is plausible provided one accepts the prerequisite claim that inherited debt is the motif most fundamental to *Hamlet*:[8]

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[2] Francis Berry, "Young Fortinbras," *Life and Letters* (February 1947), pp. 94-103; the other is by Harold Jenkins, "Fortinbras and Laertes and the Composition of *Hamlet*," *Rice University Studies*, 60 (1974), 95-108.

[3] Cf. Geoffrey Bullough (ed.), *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. VII (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975). p. 24.

[4] Cf. the Furness *Hamlet*, vol. II, p. 274.

[5] J.K. Walton, "The Structure of *Hamlet*," in *Hamlet*, ed. John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris, Stratford-upon-Avon-Studies 5 (London: Arnold, 1972), pp. 44-89.

[6] Cf. Jean Paris, "Les trois mystères de *Hamlet*," *Esprit*, 21 (1953), pp. 214-28; repr. in German translation as "Die drei Rätsel in *Hamlet*" in W. Erzgräber (ed.), *Hamlet-Interpretationen* (n. 1 above) pp. 316-36.

[7] Paris, "Die drei Rätsel in *Hamlet*," (n. 6 above) p. 320.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 321.

> Erst dann können wir sehr wohl verstehen, warum Hamlet untergehen muβ: nämlich genau deshalb, weil er das Vergehen seines Vaters wiedergutmachen muβ, das heiβt, um dem Prinzen die Stelle abzutreten, den König Hamlet zu einer Waisen, einem Enterbten gemacht hatte. Jede Tragödie hat die Beseitigung der Unordnung zum Zweck, mit der sie beginnt. Deshalb verläuft hier die Handlung einzig und allein bis zu der Auflösung des Konflikts, die der Gerechtigkeit Genüge tut: bis zum Tod von Claudius, Gertrud, Hamlet, Laertes . . . bis zur endgültigen Wiedergewinnnung der Macht durch Fortinbras, den Sohn des toten Fortinbras.[9]
>
> [Only then can we very well understand why Hamlet must perish: namely, precisely because he has to make good the crime of his father, which is to say that he has to hand over the position to the prince whom King Hamlet had turned into an orphan, bereft of his heritage. The purpose of every tragedy is to sort out the disorder with which it begins. That is why the action here proceeds solely to the dissolution of the conflict which meets the demands of justice: to the death of Claudius, Gertrude, Hamlet, Laertes . . . to the definitive regaining of power by Fortinbras, the son of the dead Fortinbras. (My translation)]

This view as well as Paris's entire exegesis pose problems which are difficult to solve. Thus one may find it hard to see why inherited debt should be the primary motif in the play. After all, does not Horatio in the first scene explain to Marcellus and Barnardo that Hamlet's father slew old Norway in a fair combat? And does he not go on to point out that

> . . . this Fortinbras, who by a seal'd compact
> Well ratified by law and heraldry
> Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands
> Which he stood seiz'd of to the conqueror[?]
>
> (1.1.89-92)

How, if this is true, can Hamlet inherit a debt in this respect? Furthermore, Paris's eclectic argumentation will affect merely those who are not allergic to allegory; the rest may want to object to Paris's equating Hamlet with Uranos, Laertes with Chronos, and Fortinbras with Zeus and thus to Paris's whole mythological interpretation.

True enough, the examples given so far represent extreme reactions to the character of Fortinbras. The majority of critics have been more moderate in their suggestions and are, by and large, agreed inasmuch as they attribute to him the dramatic purpose of acting as a parallel and foil to Hamlet.[10] Irving Ribner, for one, has summed up this aspect: Fortinbras's situation is parallel to that of Hamlet. His uncle rules Norway, although he is the dead king's son and heir, and he feels the burden of restoring to Norway the lands that have been lost, just as Hamlet feels the burden of avenging his father. This purpose Fortinbras undertakes at the same time as Hamlet undertakes his, but is deflected from his purpose by the embassy of Voltemand and Cornelius, designed possibly to parallel the embassy of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who similarly attempt to frustrate the purpose of Hamlet. Fortinbras and Hamlet both accomplish their mission, for whereas Hamlet destroys evil, Fortinbras recovers not only his lands, but all of Denmark by becoming her new king.[11] Ribner, of course, emphasizes the aspect of parallelism, an aspect recognised by a great many other critics as well, including A.C. Bradley. But Bradley also stresses a strong contrast in character, for both Fortinbras

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[9] *Ibid.*, p. 324.

> and Laertes possess in abundance the very quality which the hero seems to lack, so that, as we read, we are tempted to exclaim that either of them would have accomplished Hamlet's task in a day.[12]

Or Max Deutschbein notes:

> Die Gestalt des Fortinbras ist als Kontrastfigur zu Hamlet gedacht; denn Hamlet ist zugleich soldier, courtier und scholar, während Fortinbras den reinen Typ des Soldaten, Laertes den Höfling und Horatio den gelehrten Philosophen darstellt.[13]
>
> [The character of Fortinbras is intended as a contrastive figure to Hamlet; for Hamlet is a soldier, a courtier, and a scholar at the same

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[10] Cf. Berry, (n. 2 above), p. 94. See also, for instance, J.Q. Adams, "Commentary, in: J.Q. Adams (ed.). *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1929); and Harry Levin, *The Question of Hamlet* (London, Oxford, New York: OUP repr. 1970), p. 37.

[11] Cf. Irving Ribner, *Patterns in Shakespearian Tragedy* (London: Methuen, repr. 1971), p. 87.

[12] A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London & Basingstoke: Macmillan, repr. 1974), pp. 70 f.

[13] Deutschbein, "Shakespeare's 'Hamlet'; und Montaigne," (n. 1 above), p. 249. See also Jenkins, n. 2, above; Harold Skulsky, "Revenge, Honor, and Conscience in *Hamlet*," *PMLA*, 85 (1970), 81; Kenneth Muir. *Shakespeare Hamlet* (London: Arnold, repr. 1971), p. 44; Ruth Nevo, *Tragic Form in Shakespeare* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 24-26.

> time, whereas Fortinbras represents the pure type of the soldier, Laertes that of the courtier, and Horatio that of the learned philosopher. (My translation)]

This view of Fortinbras's significance is of course suggested by a number of references Hamlet himself makes to the Norwegian prince, notably in his "How all occasions" soliloquy in Act 4.

While most critics have appraised Hamlet's reference in Act 4 as an expression of envious admiration, Hankins has noted an aspect of criticism in these words, especially in Hamlet's pondering on the sense of sacrificing the lives of twenty thousand men for an "eggshell." Hankins has even attached a contemporary relevance to Fortinbras and his questionable Polish enterprise. Fortinbras, he contends, recalls Essex:

> Like Fortinbras, in matters of foreign policy he was in favor of war, largely from a hope of winning personal glory for himself.[14]

Furthermore he argues that Hamlet's remarks about Fortinbras reflect "Elizabeth's policy of inaction in foreign affairs."[15]

This brief survey may suffice to point to the main trends in the criticism of Fortinbras, and to serve as a point of departure for showing, later on, where the present study differs. A good deal more has of course been written about Fortinbras, especially as regards certain details of interpretation. This will have to be taken into account in due course.

One study, however, though referred to earlier, must again be mentioned here as it offers the most thorough-going and perspicacious treatment of Fortinbras so far. It is Harold Jenkins's article "Fortinbras and Laertes and the Composition of *Hamlet*." Jenkins's investigation would render superfluous a fresh consideration such as the present one if it were not for the following three points: (1) Jenkins consider Fortinbras's role and function in the light of the alleged inconsistencies in *Hamlet*, a view which will later be refuted; (2) he discusses the issue with regard to the political geography of the play, as introduced by the Polish enterprise; and (3) he only superficially treats the problem surrounding Fortinbras's role at the end of the play, an issue which will be of the utmost concern within these pages; and what Jenkins has to say on this score is open to criticism.

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[14] John Erskine Hankins, *The Character of 'Hamlet'* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, repr. 1971), p. 112.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

To sum up, both the neglect and the overemphasis of Fortinbras's significance are ill-advised. The thematic import of his character is evinced, among other things, by the fact that he represents quite a crucial instance of Shakespeare transcending his sources. Saxo Grammaticus, relating the story of Amleth in his *Historiae Danicae* (or *Danorum Regum Heroumque Historia*, Paris 1514), mentions the king of Norway, whom Amleth's father, Horwendil, slew in single combat, which mention finds its counterpart in Horatio's expository account in Act 1, Scene 1; but Saxo does not include any reference to old Norway's son, Fortinbras. At the end of the account, Amleth, having in an act of just vengeance killed first the courtiers and then his deceitful, villainous uncle, Fengo, justifies his action in an oration, moving every heart and "affecting some to compassion, and some even to tears,"[16] and is appointed king "by prompt and general acclaim." Belleforest's efforts, in the first series of his popular *Histoires Tragiques*, to give Amleth's tale of violence an edifying perspective, introduce, it is true, a new aspect into the account of the combat between Horwendil and the Norwegian king: whereas in Saxo there was simply a pact for the burial of the vanquished, Belleforest adds that the loser should ferfeit his ships' treasures; and Jenkins notes:

> Once the idea of forfeiture takes root and—again with the help of Belleforest, who has the victor overrun the coast of Norway—is joined with the loss of lands, the way is open for Young Fortinbras and his enterprise to recover them.[17]

But as a matter of fact, again there is no mention of Fortinbras in Belleforest. As in Saxo, Amleth, after avenging his father by killing his uncle, Fengon, and clearing himself of any suspicion by an oration, is appointed king.

As for those who are inclined to overemphasise the significance of Fortinbras, they ought to bear in mind that a case could well be made for assessing the role of this character in the light of the inconsistencies critics have found in *Hamlet*. After all, "the war with which he threatens Denmark (1.1) is suddenly called off for an expedition against Poland, and the hot-headed youth with his band of desperadoes becomes the leader of a disciplined army (4.4) and ultimately a fit ruler of Hamlet's realm (5.2.355ff)."[18]

[16] Bullough (n. 3 above), p. 73.

[17] Harold Jenkins, "Introduction," in *Hamlet*, Arden Shakespeare (London & New York: Methuen, 1982), p. 23.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 100.

What, then, does the text of *Hamlet* offer about the character of Fortinbras?

We first hear of "young Fortinbras" in connection with the appearance of the Ghost (1.1). Its "martial stalk" and its being in full armour "bodes," says Horatio, "some strange eruption to our state." This eruption encompasses some crisis of state, among other things. Barnardo is quick to point out that there may be a nexus between the "portentous figure" of the Ghost and "the question of these wars." These wars have to do with young Fortinbras. "Of unimproved mettle, hot and full," the prince of Norway has "sharked up" a list of lawless resolutes in order to recover from Denmark, "by strong hand / And terms compulsatory" the lands his father lost as a result of "a seal'd compact / Well ratified by law and heraldry," when he was slain by Hamlet's father in single combat.

This crisis of state is a major thematic ingredient in the play, its eminence being evident from the fact that it is introduced as early as Scene 1. The eminence is further enhanced by this matter being given a prominent place in Claudius's business of state that forms part of the dramatic substance of the court-scene (1.2). As has been noted by various critics, among the matters Claudius applies himself to, Hamlet, Claudius's "cousin" and averred "son" (1.2.64), comes last. A piece of ambidextrous significance, this may be interpreted as evidence of Claudius's deliberate slighting of his brother's son; but at the same time, the import of the character of Hamlet is stressed inasmuch as he constitutes the climactic item on Claudius's agenda. Claudius, clever statesman and ruthless schemer, may well be aware of his ambiguous treatment of the Prince of Denmark. At all events, though, his chiding of Hamlet for his "unmanly grief," which is said to betray "a will most incorrect to heaven," nay "a fault to heaven. / A fault against the dead, a fault to nature, / To reason most absurd" (1.2.94 ff), goes down well with everyone present, except Hamlet, of course, who is painfully brought to the recognition that, contrary to all personal and moral obligations, he is upbraided for being the only one dutifully mourning his father's death, a death that occurred as recently as two months ago "—nay, not so much, not two" (1.2.138). There is also Claudius's proclamation of Hamlet as "the most immediate to our throne" (1.2.109). This proclamation, although revealing and casting some suspicion on Claudius by suggesting a violated order of succession and the possibility that Hamlet may have been robbed of his legal rights as old Hamlet's successor, thus implanting the motif of usurpation[19]—this proclamation represents a clever strategic move on Claudius's part, if only because it makes Hamlet's revenge, of which Claudius is naturally unaware at this stage, even more difficult than it already is on account of the specific nature of the Ghost's commandment. For any action Hamlet may design to undertake against the king would, in the light of the proclamation, be evaluated as proof of Hamlet's unsavoury ambition. After all, Claudius is king, and he has married old Hamlet's wife with the consent and "better wisdom" (1.2.15) of the court.

It is this latter issue in 1.2, coupled with the desire to profess his apparent grief for "our dear brother's death," that represents Claudius's immediate business during the court-scene. It is of course only fitting that he and his queen should "bear [their] hearts in grief" and, moreover, that "our whole kingdom [should] be contracted in one brow of woe." In brief: Claudius is calculatingly conscientious in expressing his "wisest sorrow" over his brother's untimely demise as well as emphasising that his marriage to Gertrude—in Hamlet's opinion conducted with "most wicked speed" (1.3.156)—was arranged and undertaken "with an auspicious and a drooping eye" (1.2.11). And since his marriage was approved by the court, everyone who, like Hamlet, regards this union between Claudius and Gertrude as incestuous[20] would have to hold the entire court responsible for condoning incest.

The marriage, but likewise the crowning of Claudius, was done with an "auspicious eye," for there was, and still is, this impending crisis of state concerning young Fortinbras. When old Hamlet died—of a natural death, as the courtiers and even Gertrude have been persuaded into believing "by a forged process" (1.5.37)—a new king had to be elected in order to cope with this state of emergency. Hamlet was away at Wittenberg; only Claudius was at hand, and he did not need a lot of asking.

It is only sensible and betokens Claudius's skill as a diplomat and king that the first business of state, after he has expressed his grief and justified his marriage, should focus on the affair concerning young Fortinbras. With an opponent such as Claudius, Fortinbras is much mistaken in thinking that old Hamlet's death may have left Denmark "disjoint and out of frame" (1.2.20). Without further ceremony, Claudius effectively deals with the crisis. "We have here writ," he announces,

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[19] John Dover Wilson, *What Happens in 'Hamlet'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, repr. 1982), p. 30. However, in refutation of his view cf. Hamlet's remark in 5.2.64 ff.: "He that hath kill'd my king and whor'd my mother, / Popp'd in between th' election and my hopes." This is to say that Hamlet would not *ipso facto* have become king after his father's death. He may have cherished some hopes, but still the election would have had to "light" on him. The election, it happens, lighted on Claudius, hence it is not quite fair to lay the crime of usurpation at Claudius's door.

[20] Most members of an Elizabethan audience would have regarded the union as incestuous, since marrying one's brother's wife was considered incestuous; cf. for instance, Theodore Spencer, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man* (New York: Collier, repr. 1974), p. 105, note 6.

> To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras—
> Who, impotent and bedrid, scarcely hears
> Of this his nephew's purpose—to suppress
> His further gait herein, in that the levies,
> The lists, and full proportions are all made
> Out of his subject;
>
> (1.2.27-33)

And dispatching Cornelius and Voltemand "For bearers of this greeting to old Norway" (1.2.35), Claudius, it soon turns out, is immensely successful: Norway "sends out arrest / On Fortinbras; which he, in brief, obeys" and furthermore, he rebukes his nephew, who then "Makes vow before his uncle never more / To give th' assay of arms against" Claudius. "Overcome with joy," old Norway gives Fortinbras "three thousand crowns in annual fee / And his commission to employ" his soldiers "against the Polack" (2.2.67 ff.).

This, then, the audience learns about Fortinbras in the first two acts of the play. If they are fully attentive not only to what is actually stated, but also to what is conveyed between the lines, they are in a position to realise certain similarities between Fortinbras and Hamlet. And some, if not all, members of the audience will suspect that these similarities serve, paradoxically, to throw into relief the essential difference between the two characters. The fathers of both Fortinbras and Hamlet have been killed. It is sometimes argued that old Fortinbras was murdered by old Hamlet. But that is nonsense. Horatio refers to "ambitious Norway"; moreover old Fortinbras is said to have been "prick'd on by a most emulate pride" to combat "our valiant Hamlet"; this view of King Hamlet as a "valiant" man is not merely the biased appreciation of a Dane, for King Hamlet is esteemed, or rather was esteemed, valiant "this side of our known world"; old Hamlet slew old Fortinbras in lawful battle and rightfully gained the lands "with all bonds of law" (1.1 and 1.2) by a sealed compact. Both young Fortinbras and young Hamlet have been robbed by their uncles of their rightful claim; or, if that is too strong an assertion, in both cases the uncles have "Popp'd in between th' election and [their] hopes" (5.2.65). Both men, in their own ways, make it their business during the play to avenge their fathers.[21] As for the differences, Fortinbras, "Of unimproved mettle, hot and full," is a man of action who, sensing an advantage—as Claudius, keen on personal advantages himself, is quick to realise: "Colleaged with his dream of his advantage" (1.2.20)—avails himself of it without much deliberation; he is someone who most readily "[takes] arms against a sea of troubles" (3.1.59)—as also Laertes does—and sharks up "a list of lawless resolutes," again like Laertes (4.5), to recover what he, rightly or wrongly, believes to be his. Hamlet, on the other hand, is a considerate man, too considerate, as some would have it; for his "native hue of resolution / Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" (3.1.84.); "a dull and muddy-mettled rascal" (2.2.562); a "John-a-dreams" (2.2.563); he, because of "some craven scruple" or other, always thinks "too precisely on th' event" (4.4.40-41); where Fortinbras would act, not caring a straw how many men lose their lives as a result of some of his enterprises, conscience makes a coward of Hamlet and his "enterprises of great pitch and moment . . . lose the name of action" (3.1.86ff). In this sense, critics are right in submitting that Fortinbras acts as a foil to Hamlet.

He does so, too, as late as in Act 4, at least to some extent. But more is involved here, and this has so far largely gone unnoticed.

The first time we actually see Fortinbras is in 4.4 when he despatches a captain to inform Claudius that he "craves the conveyance of a promis'd march / Over his kingdom," as suggested by the Norwegian King in answer to Claudius's request for curbing Fortinbras's rash and injudicious intention to attack Denmark (2.2.77ff.). Fortinbras has changed; he is no longer the hot-tempered youth of Act 1 who had surrounded himself with a band of hell-raisers. Now he appears to know his station, to know also or be aware of a certain "duty" towards King Claudius, a duty which he is prepared to "express . . . in his [i.e. Claudius's] eye."[22] Though we in the audience see Fortinbras, Hamlet does not. On his way to the ship which is to take him to England, he encounters Fortinbras's emissary, who informs him:

> We go to gain a little patch of ground
> That hath in it no profit but the name.

It is, moreover, a patch that "the Polack never will defend," as Hamlet infers, though he is mistaken.

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[21] Skulsky (n. 13 above), p. 81.

[22] Cf. Jenkins's remark in his "Introduction" (n. 17 above), p. 136.

Critics are, on the whole, unanimous in believing that Fortinbras in his determinedness acts as a foil to Hamlet in his undecidedness, and that Fortinbras's resolute enterprise serves to "spur [Hamlet's] dull revenge," or so Hamlet himself suggests[23]; and this scene would seem to substantiate the view. Seeing Fortinbras potentially sacrifice the lives of twenty thousand men for "an eggshell," or a mere "straw," forces Hamlet to reflect on his "blunted purpose." Again as in the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy, positive action by someone else causes him to ponder on nobility, the nobility of being man. Like the First Player with his Hecuba speech, Fortinbras reminds Hamlet of "what a rogue and peasant slave" he is, or, for that matter, what "a dull and muddy-mettled rascal" he has so far been. And comparable to the decision he takes at the end of the soliloquy prompted by the First Player's speech, "The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king" (2.2.600f.), now, at the end of the soliloquy, prompted by the sight of Fortinbras's army, he resolves: "O, from this time forth / My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth."

The point about Hamlet's contemplation of man's nobility in the "How all occasions" speech is fully justified by the remark:

> What is a man
> If his chief good and market of his time
> Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.

In addition, Hamlet conjectures that Fortinbras is prepared to send his soldiers to their graves, even to make "mouths at the invisible event"—unlike himself, who has shrunk back from "taking arms" since that may involve his own death, and with his death "the dread of something after death"—for the sake of honour, because "honour's at the stake."

What is disturbing about the impact Fortinbras has on Hamlet is this: true, Hamlet may have been inhibited in obeying the commandment of his father's Ghost by "some craven scruple / Of thinking too precisely on th' event," or, as he phrases it, in "To be, or not to be," by the fact that his "native hue of resolution / Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." Hamlet may, in other words, have been thinking excessively "on th' event." But Fortinbras appears not to have thought at all.[24] Rather than having truly undergone a change,[25] he still gives the impression of being "of unimproved mettle, hot and full"; he still appears to be true to his self as defined in Act 1.[26] On the other hand, however, Hamlet now calls him "a delicate and tender prince." Would a delicate and tender prince risk the lives of twenty thousand soldiers for an "eggshell"? That is the question. Hamlet says Fortinbras is "with divine ambition puff'd." The verb "puff'd" surely bears negative connotations. Fortinbras may be puffed with ambition all right, but whether his is a divine kind of ambition, again that is the question.

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[23] *Ibid.*, p. 136, see also Jenkins (n. 2 above), pp. 100 & 106.

[24] For a contrary view see: W.W. Crane, "The Allegory in *Hamlet*," *Poet-Lore*, 3 (November 16, 1891), 565-69, where Crane argues that Hamlet thinks too much and is an agnostic, Laertes thinks too little; Fortinbras is the ideal type, combining thought and action.

[25] Cf. Jenkins (n. 17 above) p. 136.

In considering these issues, one must take into account the notions concerning ambition that were popular during Shakespeare's time.[27] In the course of the sixteenth century, not least because of the influence of Montaigne, a radical change in attitude towards ambition took place. Before that time, ambition was clearly branded as sinful, since it caused man to concentrate on and strive for worldly success while neglecting his religious obligations. The *exempla,* as compiled in such works as *A Mirror for Magistrates,* bear ample testimony to this conviction by dealing, almost without exception in a condemnatory manner, with the rise and fall of princely personages besotted with ambition. For Humanist writers and poets, such as Thomas More, Thomas Elyot, and Edmund Spenser, ambition was still a dangerous and sinful force. Gradually, though, the moral-philosophical as well as psychological discussion of the concept of ambition in the sixteenth century came to a more differentiated understanding. Ambition was *ipso facto* not a negative trait: it was so only if it did not find a proper outlet and objective. Bacon notes in his essay *Of Ambition*:

> Ambition is like a choler; which is an humour that maketh men active, earnest, full of alacrity and stirring, if it not be stopped. But if it be stopped, and cannot have his way it becometh adust, and thereby malign and venemous.[28]

Thus if not stopped and properly chanelled, ambition, in making men active, earnest, full of alacrity *etc.,* is a positive driving force, even a great virtue, as Ben Jonson points out in his *Discoveries*: "It is a good thing to inflame the mind; and though Ambition it selfe be a vice, it is often the cause of great vertue . . . ."[29] The whole issue of ambition as associated with Fortinbras's impact on Hamlet has to be seen against this revaluation of ambition, which in turn has to be assessed as a consequence of the suppression of the concept of *vita contemplativa* by that of *vita ac:iva* during the sixteenth century.

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[26] The present study thus contradicts Jenkins' argument in "Fortinbras and Laertes . . ." (n. 2 above).

[27] For the following remarks, I am indebted to Wolfgang Weiβ's excellent brief treatment of the issue in his *Das Drama der Shakespeare-Zeit* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Koln, Mainz: Kohlhammer, 1979), pp. 140 ff.

[28] Cited in Weiβ, ibid., p. 140.

Even though this change in thinking may account for the fact that the pursuit of honour and fame is regarded as commendable, it cannot, at the same time, justify any and every activity in life as honourable. For the question remains as to whether a man, although he may have been made active and be full of alacrity through ambition, to be truly honourable ought not to be governed by reason and not "find quarrel in a straw." Or in other words: Is it, objectively speaking, true, as Hamlet alleges, that in the case of Fortinbras's Polish campaign honour is "at the stake"?

Even in Shakespeare's day the virtue of a king, or a leader of men, resided in this man, however limited in goodness (seen as a private virtue) he might be, knowing how to preserve the well-being of the state and his subjects.[30] It is precisely in this respect that one must entertain grave doubts about Fortinbras. For if he is not guilty of violating the well-being of his subjects by fighting for "a little patch of ground / That hath in it no profit but the name," who shall not "scape whipping"? Besides, there is no telling from what the play offers whether, once he is King of Denmark, he will not sacrifice four times as many lives for another "eggshell." After all, as G.K. Hunter remarks of Henry V, "it is hard to trust the man whose conquest of environment is unsupported by any suggestion of struggle against the baseness of his own nature."[31]

A delicate and tender prince would not "find quarrel in a straw"; for him there would not be any honour at stake in a "straw." The matter of honour, if associated with a delicate and tender prince, one who at the end of the play were truly worthy of restoring peace and order, of becoming King of Denmark, is weightier by far than Hamlet makes it out to be. The issue is not one of acting recklessly, for Hamlet's problem is unique—"a father kill'd, a mother stain'd." The crux of the matter here, as in the whole of the "How all occasions" soliloquy, is that Hamlet is seeking an ideal, contrastive person to whom he can relate his subjectively felt unworthiness, even ignobleness. And he is, in doing so, apotheosising Fortinbras only to emerge the baser before his

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[29] Cited in Weiβ, ibid., p. 141.

[30] Cf. G.K. Hunter, "The Heroism of Hamlet," in *Hamlet*, Stratford-upon-Avon-Studies, 5, p. 91.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 92.

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own subjective eye. Is it not Hamlet himself who remarks that "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so" (2.2.249)? Hamlet is, mentally and emotionally, elevating Fortinbras to the rank of "a delicate and tender prince" only the better to be able to contrast himself with this figment of his imagination as a foolish, procrastinating knave, "a rogue and peasant slave" who cannot propel himself into positive action, even though he has "a father kill'd, a mother stain'd," when Fortinbras would never so much as dream "of thinking too precisely on th' event" of sacrificing twenty thousand men, who go to their graves "like beds . . . / . . . for a fantasy and trick of fame," or when Laertes, who also has "a noble father lost" (4.7.25) would "be revenged most thoroughly for [his] father" (4.5.135), would even "dare damnation" (4.5.133) and cut Hamlet's "throat i' th' church" (4.7.125). It is surely of some import that Hamlet himself refers to Fortinbras's enterprise as "a fantasy and a trick of fame."

As a common feature of the *de-casibus* pieces of the pre-Elizabethan and the Elizabethan era, the princes concerned, in choosing between a good and a bad councillor, had to let themselves be guided by reason; they had to prove themselves as considerate and moderate, not as passionate.[32] The well-known Elizabethan conflict between passion and reason, heart and brain, rears its head here. If it is true what Hamlet tells Horatio, namely that Horatio's "blood and judgement are so well commedled / That [he] is not a pipe for Fortune's finger / To sound what stop she please" (3.2.69-71), then Horatio would be the ideal man for Hamlet to contrast himself with, not someone like Fortinbras, who even as late as Act 4 and despite all statements to the contrary would nonetheless seem to be "passion's slave" (3.2.72).

Some have argued—notably among them Wolfgang Weiβ—that *Hamlet* is not so much a tragedy of revenge, as is widely held, but a 'tragedy of justice'.[33] To a certain extent, granted for the moment that it does

[32] The device of course derives from such plays as *Everyman* and the morality interludes, where the central character had regularly been furnished with a pair of advisors—a good and a bad angel, or a Virtue and a Vice—each urging him to accept the proffered counsel which was to lead to personal salvation or damnation. Those speeches constituted the dramatised debate on sin and righteousness, which formed the primary theme of the piece. In the *de-casibus* pieces, such as *Gorboduc*, the tradition of the advisor remained, but the subject was no longer spiritual salvation; now it was political expediency. Cf. Murray Roston, *Sixteenth-Century English Literature*, Macmillan History of Literature (Boston; Macmillan, 1982), p. 90.

[33] Weiβ (n. 27 above) pp. 148ff.

make sense,[34] this would help to explain why Fortinbras may make a worthy king in spite of all odds. For why indeed should he not, to all intents and purposes, act in pursuit as well as in the upkeep of law and order with the same zest and single-mindedness as he shows in Act 4 towards gaining that "little patch of ground" in Poland? Yet does this concept of a dramatic genre labelled 'tragedy of justice' make sense at all? The answer must be in the negative. Quite a few of Shakespeare's plays, especially his chronicle plays, run the course from injustice / disorder to a restoration of justice / order. In each of them, the point is of course that order and justice be restored at the end, but it is also, perhaps even more, of primary concern *how* this restoration is effected. This process ought to be plausible; and the term 'plausible' is meant here not merely in the sense of a cheap and inappropriate claim for verisimilitude. In *Hamlet*, at any rate, this process is all but plausible.

Of course, one reason for what critics, such as Harold Jenkins, have singled out as one of the inconsistencies in the play is that Shakespeare needed someone who could be appointed king at the end. Of all the characters the audience have been acquainted with, Fortinbras is the only eligible candidate who remains. So he had to be converted from a rash youth into a delicate prince, which is what is being done in Act 4. But what of "such divinity [that] doth hedge a king" (4.5.123), as Claudius has it? And what of Fortinbras's campaign in the light of Hamlet's own deliberation on that "large discourse" which looks "before and after" (4.4.36f.)? Even though Hamlet believes honour is "at the stake," Fortinbras cannot have made use of this discourse, cannot have looked before and after. For otherwise the condemnable nature of his undertaking would have become obvious to him.

What has too often been neglected is that Hamlet's appraisal of

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[34] Weiβ's label is questionable. Weiβ notes: "Unter diesem Titel wird eine Serie von Tragödien zusammengefast, die, zumeist als Rachetragödie bezeichnet, den wahrscheinlich erfolgreichsten Tragödientypus der Shakespeare-Zeit repräsentierten" (p. 148). Weiβ finds it apt to introduce this label because a revenge-tragedy, as he sees it, is for the protagonist a tragedy where the restoration of justice in human life is at stake. This does not seem a sufficient corroboration of Weiβ's own contention. Besides, in his discussion of the concept of revenge, Weiβ fails to take into account the issue of public versus private revenge, or of whether private revenge is sinful or legitimate, as treated by Fredson Bowers, Dover Wilson, and Eleanor Prosser *et al.* Moreover, if the term 'tragedy of justice' did make sense, a comparable term such as 'comedy of justice' would make even more sense. For it is one of comedy's innate characteristics that at the end justice (no matter whether poetic or otherwise in kind) be done. The point, however, would seem to be, both in comedy and tragedy, *how* justice is restored, not that it *is* restored.

Fortinbras, as also his assessment of the First Player's Pyrrhus speech and, for that matter, his praise of Horatio is a totally subjective one, for, as Hamlet himself says, "There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so." This, to exaggerate somewhat, is what the "How all occasions" soliloquy is all about, throwing into relief the subjective nature of Hamlet's judgement. Subjectively speaking and given Hamlet's particular predicament, Fortinbras's inconsiderate, hare-brained enterprise may seem laudable and worthy of being emulated. Yet assessed from a more detached standpoint, the same issue appears bootless.[35]

It is after all a striking trait in Hamlet's psychological make-up (which is not to say that he is a neurotic, as Ernest Jones *et al* wish us to believe, that at times of high tension Hamlet is given to exaggeration,[36] *vide* his overwrought speech after the Ghost has told his tale (1.5.92ff.), or after the King's flight from the play-within-the-play (3.2.282ff.), or in Ophelia's grave (even though there his 'mouthing' and 'ranting' are partly deliberate).

Fortinbras's ambition, whether divine or not—and notably Hamlet is the only one in the play to qualify it thus, hence the doubt—is of quite an extreme nature; it is in excess, and thus it represents an inordinate passion. As Lily B. Campbell argues,[37] Elizabethans believed that humours could activate the passions, and the passions could cause the distemperature of the humours. Inordinate passion could blind the understanding; in worse cases it could pervert the will, or alter the humours, and even create physical as well as mental diseases. Not wishing to contend that in Fortinbras inordinate passion has created a physical or mental disease, one may nevertheless make the point that it has blinded Fortinbras's understanding. For what else does the essentially useless sacrifice of twenty thousand men bespeak but a lack of rational consideration?[38]

[35] Cf. Hunter (n. 30 above), p. 98.

[36] Cf. E.A.J. Honigmann, "The Politics in *Hamlet*, and The World of the Play," in: *Hamlet*, Stratford-upon-Avon-Studies 5, p. 140. Cf. also John Dover Wilson, "Introduction" to the Cambridge *Hamlet*, where Dover Wilson notes: "This compulsive oscillation between extremes of frenzy and tranquillity is so marked a feature of the Prince's behaviour and provides so large an element of the rhythm of the whole play that to miss it is to miss one of the principal clues to the understanding of *Hamlet*" (p. lxiii),

[37] Lily B. Campbell, *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes: Slaves of Passion* (New York: Barnes and Nobel, repr. 1952), p. 77,

[38] I am well aware that Lily B. Campbell argues quite differently. She suggests instead that Fortinbras is portrayed as a victor of passion, as representing reason in control of passion Cf. also Morris Weitz, *Hamlet and the Philosophy of Lite-*

As suggested earlier, critics like to draw a parrallel between the "How all occasions" soliloquy and the "To be, or not to be" speech. For the present purpose another telling parallel can be drawn, namely, between the end of the "How all occasions" soliloquy in Act 4 and a statement contained in the " 'Tis now the very witching time of night" speech. There Hamlet exclaims:

> Now could I drink hot blood,
> And do such bitter business as the day
> Would quake to look on.
>
> (3.2.381-83)

In Act 4 he promises himself:

> O from this time forth
> My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth.
>
> (4.4.65-66)

The mood and intention expressed by these two statements are the same. Only in the latter case, where he is apotheosising Fortinbras, Hamlet fails to remind himself, as he does in the earlier example, that: "O heart, lose not thy nature" (3.2.384). This he would do if he tried to emulate Fortinbras.

The astounding thing about Fortinbras in Act 5—in addition to Hamlet prophesying "th' election" will light on him (5.2.360.)—is that he marches into the castle of Elsinore like a conqueror, accompanied by "warlike noise," as first the dying Hamlet and then Osric (5.2.357) remark. This is strange behaviour for someone who could of course have no knowledge of the death of the King of Denmark. There is nothing here of the dutiful attitude Fortinbras wished to exhibit towards Claudius in Act 4. Now he has come, it would strongly seem, to win the crown of Denmark—*veni, vidi, vici*.

This is probably one reason why some critics have referred to the ending of *Hamlet* as not at all a hopeful one. Thus Eleanor Prosser writes:

> I, for one, see no hope for Denmark in the fact that Fortinbras is now at the helm. His past actions give little assurance that he will be a temperate and judicious ruler who seeks only peace and stability. The manner of his final entrance is in itself matter for alarm.[39]

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rary Criticism (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), p. 85; and John Erskine Hankins *Backgrounds of Shakespeare's Thought* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978), p. 121.

[39] Prosser (n. *1* above) p. 239.

And Peter Hall is quoted as commenting that he would not particularly like to live in a Denmark in which Fortinbras reigns.[40] Quite a few critics, however, have thought differently about the ending and Fortinbras's appointment. According to Francis Berry, Hamlet names Fortinbras with his last breath as the heir to the Danish throne because he realises "that this splendid youth . . . is the one who has succeeded in his life whereas he himself has failed."[41] Berry goes on to remark:

> Fortinbras, the slim, athletic, blond youth, has the right to the throne of Denmark because he is spiritually the heir of his father's foe. Old Hamlet has also "smote the sledded Polack on the ice," and would have recognized in Fortinbras the son he would liked to have had, and who would have accomplished duties with effective speed, without the necessity of an exacted promise.[42]

This argument may be rather speculative, to say the least; and as for the blond youth's right to the Danish throne, this is quite an untenable assertion. More will be said about this later. Dieter Mehl has seen the following thematic function in the ending of *Hamlet:*

> Was sich am Schluβ des Dramas ereignet, lieβe sich eher als Zurückführung des tragischen Pathos in die Niederungen einer alltäglicheren Welt beschreiben. Die zupackende Tüchtigkeit des Fortinbras wird andere Maβstäbe setzen als Hamlet. Der neue König gehört kaum mehr der heroischen und gedanklich differenzierten Welt des Hamlet an, deren ungeheure Leiden und Verbrechen nun einer gewöhnlicheren und überschaubareren Erfahrungswirklichkeit Platz machen werden . . . so wird auch hier in der abschlieβenden Zusammenfassung durch Horatio und Fortinbras der Eindruck erzeugt, daβ wir nun von einer übermenschlichen Dimension in eine vertraute Realität zurückkehren.[43]
>
> [What happens at the close of the play could sooner be described as a reduction of tragic pathos to the seamy level of the everyday world. Fortinbras's determined efficiency will set standards different from those of Hamlet. The new king hardly belongs any more to the

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[40] Jan Kott, "Orestes, Elektra, Hamlet," from *The Eating of the Gods,* repr. in German translation in: W. Erzgräber (ed.), *Hamlet-Interpretationen,* p. 542 (n. 1 above).

[41] Berry (n. 2 above), p. 101.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

[43] Dieter Mehl, "Shakespeare, *Hamlet,*" in D. Mehl (ed.), *Das englische Drama vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. I (Dusseldorf: Bagel, 1970), p. 170.

> heroic and intellectually differentiated world of Hamlet, the immense sorrows and atrocious crimes of which will now give way to a more ordinary and more easily comprehensible empirical reality . . . thus in the final summary by Horatio and Fortinbras the impression is created that we now return from a suprahuman dimension to familiar reality. (My translation)]

Mehl's idea that the end brings the events back from the height of tragic pathos to the mundane world of everyday reality is no doubt stimulating, but in no way does it account for all the issues involved in appointing Fortinbras King of Denmark. Nor does Jan Kott's somewhat eclectic exegesis, which, in order to be fully appreciated, needs more extensive quotation:

> The cycle of vengeance has come to an end. Like Menelaus in the *Odyssey*, Fortinbras arrives at Elsinore and surveys the dead bodies. But will order and justice be restored to Danish Mycenae with his arrival? This we do not know.[44]

And:

> Hamlet, king of Denmark, killed old Fortinbras, the king of Norway, in a duel to settle a frontier dispute. Later Claudius poisoned old Hamlet, married his wife and ascended the throne of Denmark. What can we expect? Clearly the prognosis is a cycle of feudal revenge, which will include the murder of Claudius and Gertrude by Hamlet . . . Young Fortinbras must become the king of Denmark. This is the superstructure of action in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. . . . In order that the cycle of vengeance may be ended, young Fortinbras has to ascend the throne of Denmark without bloodshed. For this to happen, Hamlet must die without being killed by Fortinbras.[45]

A vendetta as the motif most fundamental to *Hamlet*? This contention is slightly beyond what the text actually offers. A similar objection can be raised against Francis Fergusson's comparable attempt to elucidate *Hamlet* as a "myth and ritual" drama. Fergusson attaches a very specific significance to the character of Fortinbras. As part of the whole ritual, Fortinbras is said to serve as a symbol of spiritual rebirth after the cleansing by the scourge. He thus functions as an important constituent of the ancient myth and ritual pattern of drama, the celebration of the mystery cycle of human life:

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[44] Jan Kott, *The Eating of the Gods. An Interpretation of Greek Tragedy* (London: Methuen, 1973), p. 248.

[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 261 ff.

> Fortinbras does not destroy, he 'places' the action of the play by suddenly revealing a new analogue of this action. The effect . . . is not to provide us with an intellectual key, an explicit philosophy, but to release us from the contemplation of the limited mystery of Denmark by returning us to the wider mystery of life in the world at large.[46]

Fergusson's explanation works only if one is prepared to accept its mythological premises. Quite a few readers would presumably balk at this approach for similar reasons that they balk at psychoanalytic interpretations of Hamlet.[47] Notwithstanding these, Fergusson's arguments are based on notions of myth and ritual which are too vague by far.[48] Edward Dowden may not offer the most original idea about the ending of *Hamlet*, but at least he makes swift play of the whole business. According to him, the ending betrays a lack of interest on Shakespeare's part:

> . . . it it not the downfall of the Danish monarchy, and of a corrupt society, together with the accession of a new dynasty and of a hardier civilization that chiefly interested Shakspere [sic].[49]

Granville-Barker, in turn, merely recognises "a last quiet stroke of tragic irony" in Hamlet's slipping "peacefully out of life—to the rhythm of the drumbeats of the triumphant approach of the man whose 'divine ambition' put him to such shame."[50] Oddly enough, W.C. Foreman, in what must certainly be regarded as one of the most thorough analyses of the end, does not in the least seem bothered by Fortinbras being offered the crown.[51]

In the face of the opinions summarised above, what does the text of Act 5 offer that is significant about Fortinbras? Tellingly enough, after his rather perfunctory remark on "this quarry" which "cries on havoc" (5.2.369), the next thing preying on his mind is to "embrace [his] fortune" and to claim "some rights of memory in this kingdom." In other words, he senses an opportunity to satisfy his hot-tempered ambition and avail himself of it. But as for those alleged rights of memory, he has none whatsoever, since his father was killed in a fair fight, thus forfeiting "with his life, all those his lands / Which he stood seiz'd of to the conqueror" (1.1.91ff.), to say nothing of any lands belonging to Denmark. Fortinbras simply does not have a just cause. While watching the play, one is not very likely to become aware of these facts, nor of the question why Hamlet's prophecy should become true. Why should "th' election" light upon Fortinbras? To those whose business it would be, or will be, to elect a successor to Claudius, Fortinbras has, on account of his questionable enterprise, caused nothing but headaches. Hamlet's dying voice may play some part in suggesting Fortinbras to them as a candidate. But then did they not "all" cry "Treason! treason!" (5.2.328) when Hamlet stabbed Claudius only a minute before? Admittedly, Laertes then informs them that the King "is justly serv'd" and Horatio promises to tell all, "of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts," and "purposes mistook / Fall'n on th' inventors' heads." But even so, would that be reason enough to make an outsider King of Denmark? On the strength of the evidence given in the play, it is more than doubtful whether Fortinbras, if he is "put on" (*i.e.* put to the test and appointed king), will prove "most royal." Fortinbras may rightfully say so of Hamlet (5.2.402f.), yet who would want to say the same of Fortinbras? He does not at all appear now to be "blest [as] . . . those / Whose blood and judgement are . . . well commeddled" (3.2.68f.). In him, passion and reason, blood and judgement, are still at variance; he is, in spite of all words to the contrary, "passion's slave," and judging from Hamlet's praise of Horatio, it is somewhat hard to conceive how Hamlet really could wear Fortinbras in his "heart's core, in [his] heart of heart" (3.2.72). The Prince of Norway is not very likely ever to "Banish the canker of ambitious thoughts," as Gloucester opines of Henry VI (*Henry VI*, Part 2, 1.2.18).

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[46] Francis Fergusson, *The Idea of a Theatre* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 140.

[47] Cf. E.D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 122 ff.

[48] Cf. Weitz (n. 38 above), p. 103; see also the other arguments Weitz submits against Fergusson, pp. 103 ff.

[49] Edward Dowden, *Shakespere—A Critical Study of His Mind and Art* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1909) p. 128.

[50] Harley Granville-Barker, *Frefaces to Shakespeare* (London: Batsford, repr. 1972), p. 157.

[51] W.C. Foreman, *The Music of the Close* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1978) pp. 111 ff.

Wolfgang Clemen, in "Shakespeare und das Königtum,"[52] notes an "emphatic bringing out" ("Nachdrückliches Heraussheben") of what it means to be king in an impressive number of textual instances which have in common that they "show a consciousness of dignity" ("die das lebendige Bewuβtsein der würde durchscheinen lassen"). As for Fortinbras, it would be preposterous to claim that he is "every inch a king" (*Lear*, 4.4.109). Furthermore, it is significant that of the numerous characteristics Clemen, drawing on a rich variety of Shakespearean plays, singles out as pertaining to a king, none really fits Fortinbras.

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[52] Wolfgang Clemen, "Shakespeare und das Konigtum," *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch (West)*, 68 (1932), p. 59.

One could contend that the ending of *Hamlet*, with Fortinbras succeeding Claudius, is plausible only if viewed not in the light of 'monarchomachistic' ideas of state, as suggested by Maior (1469-1550) or Knox (1505-72), but viewed in the light of Machiavellian ideas. Machiavelli recommended the desire for power as the *virtu ordinata* of 'princes'; only that individual counts who is active and for whom success means everything; efficacy alone is decisive.[53] But does Shakespeare, as far as it is possible to judge his plays, sympathise with this type of Machiavellian prince? This is the question Agnes Henneke has attempted to answer in her study "Shakespeares englische Könige,"[54] and her answer is in the negative. One may recall only the repeated admonitions of Henry V to his counsellors to bethink themselves of the immense responsibility which they load upon their shoulders by recommending to him the war with France as just (*Henry V,* 1.2.). Or consider Henry's words:

> In peace there's nothing so becomes a man
> As modest stillness and humility:
> But when the blast of war blows in our ears
> Then imitate the action of a tiger,
> (*Henry V*, 3.1.3ff.)

There is no blast of war blowing in Fortinbras's ears; he imitates the action of a tiger in times of peace; he lacks modest stillness and humility. Above all, he lacks "moderation—a spice of temperance," which Thomas Elyot demands of kings.[55]

And yet, at the end of *Hamlet*, in the midst of all the "carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts, / Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters" (5.2.386ff.), and with the stage strewn with corpses, Fortinbras is the only one who remains eligible to become King of Denmark. Shakespeare simply needed a new king at the close of events. Which is not to deny the appropriateness of Peter Hall's assessment that to live in a Denmark reigned over by Fortinbras would be no fun at all.[56]

[53] Cf. the informative essay by Agnes Henneke, "Shakespeares englische Konige im Lichte staatsrechtlicher Strömungen seiner Zeit," *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch (West)*, 66 (1930). 79-144; esp. pp. 85, 123, 135, 141 ff.

[54] *Ibid.*,

[55] *The Boke Named the Gouernour*, vol. III, ch. 21, ed. Henry Herbert & Stephen Croft (New York, repr. 1967), p. 327.

[56] Quoted in Jan Kott (n. 40 above), p. 542.

The Function of Horatio in *Hamlet*

GHANSHIAM SHARMA

Both the character and the role of Horatio in *Hamlet* have received scant critical attention, largely for the reason that Hamlet and his problems provide "metal more attractive." Even A.C. Bradley, whom G. Wilson Knight accuses of pushing "character-analysis to an unnecessary extreme,"[1] silently and "reluctantly" passes by "the beautiful character of Horatio."[2] Francis G. Schoff discusses him as a "Shakespearean confidant,"[3] but insists on his ineffectiveness. Maynard Mack, commenting on his role as a "foil" to set off the character of Hamlet, finally dismisses Horatio with a rhetorical question:

> In *Hamlet*, the relation of foil to hero undergoes an unusual adaptation. Here, since the raciest idiom of the play belongs to the hero himself, the foil, Horatio, is given a quite conventional speech, and, to make the contrast sharper . . . as little speech as may be. . . . Horatio's "Here, sweet lord," "O, my dear lord," "Well, my lord" are presumably . . . a better way than Hamlet's self-lacerating virtuosities and verbosities. But of course, we do not believe this and are not meant to: who would be Horatio if he could be Hamlet?[4]

Richmond Hathorn quotes Hamlet's praise of Horatio (3.2. 50-70)[5] as a "self-sufficient man" but refuses to take it seriously:

> Hamlet, it must be noted, only "wears" such a man in his heart's core, for if he has any thought of becoming one, he definitely "recks not his own rede." Actually, till his dying voice, his dear soul's "election" lights on Fortinbras, the fiery man of Honor.[6]

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[1] G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire* (London: Methuen & Co., 1930, prefatory note first published, 1949). Quotation from 1949 edition, p. v.

[2] A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Macmillan. 1966), p. 198.

[3] Francis G. Schoff, "Horatio: A Shakespearean Confidant," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 7 (1956), 53-57.

[4] Maynard Mack, "The Jacobean Shakespeare: Some Observations on the Construction of the Tragedies," in John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris, eds., *Jacobean Theatre* (London: Edward Arnold, 1965), p. 16.

[5] All references to *Hamlet* in this paper are to Bernard Lott, ed., *Hamlet* in the New Swan Shakespeare Advanced Series (London: Longmans, 1969).

[6] Richmond Y. Hathorn, *Tragedy, Myth and Mystery* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), p. 157.

To many critics Horatio is thus little more than a beautiful but ineffectual character, no matter whether he is considered as a "confidant" or "foil" of the hero. It is true that most of the time Horatio appears as a disinterested spectator of action in the play. It needs to be emphasized, however, that his apparent inaction or ineffectiveness is not due to any craven scruples or weakness of character. In 1.1, for example, Horatio would "cross" the Ghost even if it blast him, though professional soldiers like Bernardo and Marcellus hesitate even to name "this thing." Again, in 1.4 he boldly follows Hamlet after his failure to dissuade the Prince from going after the Ghost. Most significantly, he tries to die with Hamlet at the end of the play because he has no desire to survive his friend:

> I am more an antique Roman than a Dane.
> Here's yet some liquor left.
>
> (5.2.323-24)

And if he denies himself this one "felicity" it is only because Hamlet persuades him to "report" him and his cause "aright to the unsatisfied":

> As th' art a man,
> Give me the cup, Let go; by Heaven, I'll have it.
> O God, Horatio, what a wounded name
> Things standing thus unknown shall live behind me!
> If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
> Absent thee from felicity awhile,
> And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
> To tell my story.
>
> (5.2. 324-31)

Surely, Hamlet, who values Horatio's counsel more than his own and his friendship more than his own life, understands this character much better than the critics. In the present paper I hope to show that not only is Horatio a remarkable character in his own right but he is also vital for the overall framework of the play. What is more, the several functions that he performs in this drama are consistent with the traits of his character.

From our experience of *Hamlet* we can, by hindsight, see that Shakespeare faced two problems in the opening scene: to establish the identity of the Ghost and make us question the purpose of this supernatural visitation. For, in the first place, some people in the audience would be naturally sceptical about the reality of the Ghost. Secondly, if Hamlet's later concern that the Ghost not be demonic is to be answered, the thinking about this problem must start early in the play. Horatio's actions and speeches in the first scene seem designed to perform these twin functions.

When the scene opens we learn that Bernardo and Marcellus, two officers of the watch, have brought a reluctant Horatio to the platform to confirm the appearance of the Ghost, should it appear yet a third night. Thus even before he sees the Ghost, Horatio emerges as an emblem of the audience's disbelief in the reality of this apparition:

> MARCELLUS. Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,
> And will not let belief take hold of him
> Touching this dreaded sight twice seen of us,
> Therefore I have entreated him along
> With us to watch the minutes of this night,
> That, if again this apparition come,
> He may approve our eyes, and speak to it.
>
> (1.1.23-29)

Horatio's condescending attitude towards the apparently superstitious officers of the watch and his doubt about the reality of the Ghost are evident from his subsequent speeches:

> Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.
> . . . .
> Well, sit we down,
> And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.
>
> (1.1.30-34)

Here, Shakespeare's dramatic strategy is fairly simple and commonplace: if the audience doubts the reality of something in the play, let a character express this doubt and have it removed on the stage. So, when Horatio, who acts as the audience's spokesman at this point in the play, has seen the Ghost and agreed with the officers of the watch that it is a "mote to trouble the mind's eye," the audience is also willing to "let belief take hold" of it.

But why should Bernardo and Marcellus request Horatio of all people to come to the platform at midnight and act as a witness? This question is answered as soon as the Ghost appears on the stage: Horatio is a scholar and therefore, according to popular belief, competent to speak to the Ghost in Latin and perhaps exorcise it.[7] Simultaneously the audience is also informed, as if casually, of a major attribute of Horatio: his scholarship.

As soon as the powerful reality of the Ghost is established as a "given" of the play, Shakespeare puts Horatio to the second use, namely, to interpret the intentions of the Ghost. His scholarship makes Horatio a fit person to express and juxtapose divergent theories about the Ghost's intentions. At first, he takes the Ghost to be an evil spirit that

> . . . usurp'st this time of night
> Together with that fair and warlike form
> In which the majesty of buried Denmark
> Did sometimes march.
>
> (1.1. 46-49)

What Horatio says here about the Ghost is consistent with orthodox pneumatology which emphasized that all spirits were diabolical.[8] But since the Ghost has not spoken and since Horatio himself does not know for certain, all that he can say by way of conjecture is that this supernatural appearance "bodes some strange eruption to our state."

When the Ghost appears a second time in this scene, Horatio's approach is circumspect:

> Stay, illusion!
> If thou hast any sound or use of voice,
> Speak to me.
> If there be any good thing to be done,
> That may to thee do ease and grace to me,
> Speak to me.
> If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
> Which happily foreknowing may avoid,
> O, speak!

[7] See John Dover Wilson, *What Happens in 'Hamlet'* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 75-76.

[8] In her *Hamlet and Revenge* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), p. 101, note 3, Eleanor Prosser provides a brief survey of the principal pneumatological writings of the period, and on the basis of these insists on the diabolical nature of the Ghost. Dover Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-86, discusses several conflicting theories about ghosts in Shakespeare's time. More recently, the subject has been examined by R.F. Fleissner in *HamS*, 1 (1979), 23-34 and 5 (1983), 111-13.

> Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
> Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,
> For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,
> Speak of it.
>
> (1.1. 128-39)

In this single speech Horatio offers three different understandings of the appearance of the Ghost. In lines 131-33 he offers an interpretation which the Roman Catholics of the audience would endorse: the Ghost is the spirit of Old Hamlet from purgatory. Horatio's second interpretation (11. 134-36) does not entirely cancel the first but it restates his earlier conjecture that the appearance of the Ghost is an omen of imminent national disaster. This line of thinking is also evident in his reference to the appearance of ghosts and spirits in Rome before the murder of Julius Caesar:

> In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
> A little are the mightiest Julius fell,
> The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead
> Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets:
> As stars with trains of fire, and dews of blood,
> Disasters in the sun; and the moist star,
> Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,
> Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.
>
> (1.1. 113-20)

This time, however, Horatio makes the spirit of Old Hamlet appear as personally interested in the fate of Denmark. The third interpretation (11. 137-39) that Horatio offers is ascribed to folk-belief ("they say"): do not the spirits of the dead misers often appear to guard their buried treasures? In 1.4 Horatio again takes the Ghost as an instrument of darkness and warns Hamlet not to follow it:

> What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
> Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
> That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
> And there assume some other horrible form,
> Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason,
> And draw you into madness?
>
> (1.4. 69-74)

Clearly, the Ghost is here considered from an Elizabethan standpoint as a demon disguised as Old Hamlet so as to do young Hamlet harm. It would seem that Shakespeare has deliberately incorporated, in Horatio's speeches in the first act, several divergent frames of references to the identity and intentions of the Ghost so as to make this apparition ambiguous and, thereby, to justify Hamlet's later doubt.[9] (In this respect, Horatio acts as the author's point of reference, or so it seems to me; for whatever view he expresses, it encourages in the audience familiar but dramatically purposeful responses to the Ghost.)

The ambiguity of the Ghost is just one of the many crucial and baffling issues of the play. But there are many others for which Shakespeare employs Horatio as a reliable commentator, so as to guide the audience's response. This is all the more necessary because Hamlet can at best present his own subjective reaction to an event. More significantly, given his character and state of mind,[10] he cannot be regarded as a dependable commentator on action in which he himself is involved. For though he speaks several long soliloquies and reveals what is going on within his mind at a particular time, he often doubts his own judgement and, sometimes, even contradicts himself within a single soliloquy. Take, for example, the relatively simple soliloquy after his meeting with Fortinbras's captain. Although he extols Fortinbras, the man of honour and "divine ambition," Hamlet is simultaneously aware that this sort of honour consists in finding "quarrel in a straw" and in risking the lives of twenty thousand men for the sake of an "egg-shell" which is not "tomb enough and continent to hide the slain" (4.4.64-65).

So when the issues are more complicated Shakespeare uses Horatio as a chorus to confirm or deny what Hamlet says on a particular subject. In his first soliloquy (1.2. 129-59), for instance, Hamlet speaks of the "most wicked speed" with which his mother married Claudius after the death of her first husband. Hamlet's view that the marriage was indeed overhasty is confirmed when, after a few moments, he discusses the subject with Horatio:

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[9] Some critics, such as A.C. Bradley, p. 104, and H.B. Charlton *(Shakespearian Tragedy*, Cambridge, 1948, p. 87) thought that Hamlet's doubt of the Ghost was unreal. But more recently *Hamlet* critics have recognized that the Ghost is indeed ambiguous and that Hamlet's doubt is not unfounded. See, for example, Prosser, *op. cit.*, Kenneth Muir *(Shakespeare: Hamlet;* London, Arnold, 1971, pp. 20-23), Dover Wilson, *op. cit.*

[10] Writing on Hamlet's state of mind, Harry Levin comments, "Hamlet is thoughtsick rather than brainsick—neurotic rather than psychotic, to state the matter in more clinical terms." See Levin, "The Antic Disposition," in *Hamlet: A Casebook*, ed. John Jump (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 124.

HAMLET. But what is your affair in Elsinore?
. . . . .
HORATIO. My Lord, I came to see your father's funeral.
HAMLET. I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow student;
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.
HORATIO. Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon.
(1.2.173-9)

In 3.2 Hamlet himself asks Horatio to judge Claudius's reaction to the Gonzago play (Hamlet's Mousetrap to "catch the conscience of the king") and determine whether or not Claudius is guilty of Old Hamlet's murder. It is true that the audience has already learnt of Claudius's guilt through his aside:

The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted word.
O, heavy burden.
(3.1.51-54)

But so far as Hamlet is concerned, he does not possess this superior knowledge; he has had, instead, to go by his own "prophetic soul" and the Ghost's account of the murder. And, since he distrusts both his own intuition and the Ghost's word, he needs an objective observer like Horatio to act as a co-judge to watch the King's reaction to the play. When Claudius stops the performance of the Gonzago drama midway and leaves the stage without giving any reason for his sudden departure, Horatio and Hamlet compare notes and declare the king guilty:

HAMLET. O good Horatio! I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound. Didst perceive?
HORATIO. Very well, my lord.
HAMLET. Upon the talk of the poisoning—
HORATIO. I did well note him.
(3.2.270-74)

In 5.2 Shakespeare employs Horatio both to receive privileged information on Hamlet's off-stage action during his abortive voyage to England and to guide the audience's response to this action. From the conversation between the two friends we learn how Hamlet has had a providential escape from Claudius's treacherous plot and how he has "hoist the engineer with his own petar" by sending Guildenstern and

Rosencrantz to their imminent death in England. It is possible for a reader or a spectator to hold Hamlet responsible for the "murder"[11] of these two pantaloons. But with Horatio's reactions to the whole off-stage episode—"Is it possible?" (25), "Ay, good my Lord" (37), and "How was it [the commission] sealed?" (47)—the full scope of Claudius's villainy appears. "Why, what a king is this?" says Horatio (62). The audience would endorse Horatio's tacit condonation of Hamlet's involvement in the death of his two school-time friends because it knows from Horatio's actions and speeches in the rest of the play that this scholar has the courage of conviction to differ with his royal friend when the occasion so demands. For example, when Hamlet begins to trace the progress of "the noble dust of Alexander" to a "bung-hole," Horatio politely tells him that " 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so" (5.1.185-86). Again, when Hamlet accepts Laertes's challenge for the duel, Horatio warns him, "You will lose the wager, my lord" (5.2.192).

Finally, the most important function of Horatio in *Hamlet* is to serve not only as a "foil" to the hero but also as a strong positive element in the whole tragedy. For in a dramatic world which is dominated by chance and fortune, evil passions and Machiavellian villainy, doubt and uncertainty, Horatio remains above evil and suffering, not by taking arms against a "sea of troubles" but by suffering "nothing" while "suffering all." Where the King is guilty of fratricide, incest, and villainy, where the one-time "virtuous" queen becomes an epitome of infidelity and female lust, where schoolmates betray their friend for royal patronage and reward, where an innocent girl is compelled to spy on her lover and her hot-headed but chivalric brother is made a willing tool of Machiavellian cunning, and where a noble prince acts—or feels he acts—as the slave of passion and Fortune and nearly loses the balance of his mind, Horatio upholds the banner of personal integrity. This is why Hamlet values Horatio's friendship as much as he values his judgement and wisdom, and looks up to him as the ideal he would like to emulate:

HAMLET. Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
  As e'er my conversation coped withal.

HORATIO. O my dear lord—

HAMLET. Nay, do not think I flatter;
  For what advancement may I hope from thee,

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[11] See L.C. Knights, *An Approach to 'Hamlet'* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1961), p. 33.

That no revenue hast but thy good spirits
To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flattered?
No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,
And could of men distinguish her election
Sh'ath sealed thee for herself. For thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing;
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Has ta'en with equal thanks. And blest are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee.

(3.2.50-70)

Clearly, Hamlet regards Horatio as an embodiment of what Elizabethans considered best in Stoic philosophy. His virtues, as Hamlet describes them, are active rather than passive,[12] for in "suffering all" he "suffers nothing;" and if he is not a pipe for Fortune to play upon, it is because he has taken Fortune's buffets and rewards with equal thanks. Perhaps it is not a mere coincidence that what Travis Bogard says of an ideal Stoic hero in Chapman's tragedies seems to be a paraphrase of the qualities that Hamlet attributes to Horatio in the above speech: "The hero was modeled after the Stoic philosopher, the man who had realized his potential inner strength to a degree where he was contemptuous of the rewards of Fortune, ready for death, and therefore able through the strength of his character to endure any evil. He was perfect—in Chapman's phrase, 'a complete man.' "[13]

This explains why Hamlet would surely like to be Horatio if no one else did. It is significant that so long as Hamlet remains a slave of passion and tries to take up arms against a "sea of troubles" he heaps unbearable misery on himself and others. But once he has learnt through personal experience that "there's a divinity that shapes our ends / Rough-hew them how we will" (5.2.10-11), he can, like Horatio, take the buffets and rewards of Fortune with perfect equanimity:

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[12] On the issue of Horatio's apparent passivity in the play, D.G. James, in his "Moral and Metaphysical Uncertainty" in *Hamlet: A Casebook* (n. 10 above), pp. 82-83, writes, "Horatio is one who, in suffering all, suffers nothing; Hamlet is one who, in suffering nothing, suffers everything. He is active where Horatio is passive, and passive where Horatio is active."

[13] Travis Bogard, *The Tragic Satire of John Webster* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), p. 22.

> There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all. Since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes? Let be.
>
> (5.2.202-05)

And divinity, it would seem, does finally shape his ends though Hamlet has inadvertently rough-hewn them all along. Despite "cause, and will, and strength, and means" (4.4.45), he failed to kill Claudius, but divinity does finally hoist this Machiavellian "engineer with his own petar" when he dies as a result of the poison he had prepared for Hamlet. And poison, we must remember, has been Claudius's principal weapon throughout his career. No doubt, Hamlet dies in the process, but what he valued most lives on in Horatio and that other noble survivor, Fortinbras. For these two will now combine what had once belonged to Hamlet in the pre-*Hamlet* world: "The courtier's, soldiers's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword" (3.1.150). With Fortinbras as king and Horatio as his adviser, the post-*Hamlet* Denmark of the play is surely in better hands.

Providential Visitations in *Hamlet*

JOHN W. MAHON

Shakespeare has designed *Hamlet* so that, at its conclusion, what the hero calls "a divinity that shapes our ends" (5.2.10) is evident in the very structure of the play. Harley Granville-Barker has observed that in *Hamlet* "Shakespeare has adopted something very like unity of place."[1] Indeed, *Hamlet* is the only one of Shakespeare's major tragedies to possess this unity: all of the action takes place in Elsinore. Even when the hero himself leaves Denmark, the play remains behind.

For Granville-Barker, this "deliberate concentration of the action at Elsinore" emphasizes that *Hamlet* is a "tragedy of inaction," and this theme is further emphasized "by the sense also given us of the constant coming and going around Hamlet of the busier world without" (p. 41). Shakespeare gives us a claustrophobic sense of Denmark as a "prison" (2.2.243) which characters constantly visit and leave. I wish to focus on the "coming and going around Hamlet." The play is filled with arrivals and departures. In act 1, scene 2, Laertes begins his departure for Paris, and Voltemand and Cornelius are dispatched to Norway. Horatio, in the same scene, reports that he has visited Elsinore for old Hamlet's funeral, and later Rosencrantz and Guildenstern arrive, are "sent for," as they admit to Hamlet (2.2.292), by Claudius and Gertrude.

Four arrivals possess special significance and extraordinary impact; they play a special role as the voice of Providence. These visits occur at regular intervals, serving as catalysts to action at Elsinore. All of these visits share a significant trait: they are not brought about by human agency, especially not by the usually-passive hero; and they are all completely unexpected. These visits are providential, decreed by divine Providence:

(1) The Ghost visits Elsinore (1.1)
(2) The Players visit Elsinore and perform at the castle and the Ghost appears again (2.2 and 3.4)
(3) Hamlet himself is the providential visitor (4.7)
(4) And finally, before the play ends, Fortinbras arrives (5.2)

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[1] Harley Granville-Barker, *Preface to "Hamlet"* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957).

Many critics have discussed the play in terms of unity of place and providential action.[2] My reading of the play owes much to two critics who view *Hamlet* in relationship to classical Greek tragedy. H.D.F. Kitto calls *Hamlet* religious drama, and he contends that such tragedy "is a distinct kind, with principles of its own, different from those of tragedy of character, the form of tragedy that Artistotle analyzed [in the *Poetics*]." Noting that eight people die in *Hamlet*, Kitto writes:

> The conception which unites these eight persons in one coherent catastrophe may be said to be this: evil, once started on its course, will so work as to attack and overthrow impartially the good and the bad; and if the dramatist makes us feel, as he does, that a Providence is ordinant in all of this, that, as with the Greeks, is his way of universalizing the particular event.[3]

And Tom Driver argues that a sense of divine Providence informs the play. Despite the divine injunction against revenge, Driver sees Hamlet's mission as "heaven-directed."[4]

Defining *Providence*, the *OED* quotes from William Warner's 1602 addition to *Albions England:* the "acting power [of Providence] doth all begin and end." It is in this sense that "Providence is ordinant" most clearly in the visitations I have mentioned: the Ghost reveals the source of the evil; the Players reenact the evil deed and help to confirm the Ghost's story; Hamlet himself eliminates the evil in the tragic catastrophe; and Fortinbras becomes the new King.

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[2] As I have already noted, Granville-Barker identifies the exclusive focus on Elsinore. A wide range of critics has influenced my ideas on the providential structure, most notably Bertram Joseph, *Conscience and the King* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1953), Fredson Bowers, "Hamlet as Minister and Scourge," *PMLA*, 70 (1955), 740-49, Ruth Nevo, *Tragic Form in Shakespeare* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), and Alan Sinfield, "Hamlet's Special Providence," *Shakespeare Survey*, 33 (1980), 89-97. Sinfield provocatively contends that *Hamlet* is "a Christian play in the Elizabethan sense of the term" but that Hamlet himself remains a fatalist, as uncomfortable as are modern audiences at the working out of Providence. He also writes that

> the cause for his [Hamlet's] change [in act 5] seems to be the extraordinary turns events have taken—the appearance of the Ghost when Claudius seemed secure, the arrival of the players prompting the test of the king, Hamlet's felicitous discovery of the plot against his life and above all his amazing delivery through the pirates. The latter especially is so improbable, and so unnecessary to the plot, that we may suppose Shakespeare wishes the audience also to be impressed with the special interventions of Providence (p. 92).

[3] H.D.F. Kitto, *Form and Meaning in Drama* (London: Methuen, 1956), pp. 238, 330.

[4] Tom Driver, *The Sense of History in Greek and Shakespearean Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 119.

The play begins and ends with death: at the beginning, there is talk of old King Hamlet and his amazing return from the dead; at the end, there is the amazing return of young Hamlet from certain death in England; his continued life haunts his uncle Claudius until both of them die in the denouement, the dead new King Hamlet borne "like a soldier to the stage" (5.2.401) as the bodies of Claudius, Gertrude, and Laertes are carried off. The Ghost dominates act 1; Hamlet, returning from the sea, "set naked" (4.7.42) on Denmark's shore like a character of romance, dominates the final movement of the play. From the beginning Claudius knows nothing of Hamlet's pact with the Ghost; at the end, Hamlet knows nothing of the evil pact between Claudius and Laertes until it is too late.

I

The first providential visitation, that of the Ghost, begins in confusion. In the opening scene of the play, the characters see the Ghost of old King Hamlet and they theorize about its intentions, but the true significance of its visit is lost on them. The Ghost refuses to speak, not even to the scholar Horatio, though he eloquently pleads;

> If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
> Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,
> O speak . . . .
>
> (1.1.136-138)

Like the characters, the audience feels a sense of foreboding and uncertainty about the nature of this apparition.

But two scenes intervene before the Ghost appears again and eliminates uncertainty. The scene at court includes all but one of the major characters; in his first soliloquy, we see Hamlet as confused, grief-stricken, despairing. Yet his behavior also demonstrates his wit, his friendliness, and his resolve—told of the Ghost, he decides to "watch tonight" (1.2.242).

Ophelia makes her first appearance in the next scene, as she bids Laertes farewell. Here we see another side of Hamlet, his affection for Ophelia. Laertes warns his sister against what he fears are Hamlet's dishonorable intentions; after all, argues Laertes, Hamlet's choice of a wife is not his own:

His greatness weigh'd, his will is not his own.
For he himself is subject to his birth:
He may not, as unvalu'd persons do,
Carve for himself, for on his choice depends
The sanity and health of this whole state;
And therefore must his choice be circumscrib'd
Unto the voice and yielding of that body
Whereof he is the head.

(1.3.17-24)

Pointing to Hamlet's role as future king of Denmark, Laertes's lines possess a significance far beyond their immediate context. As king, Hamlet will be more than a private person; he will in some mysterious sense *be* Denmark. Twice Laertes speaks of the *choice* Hamlet will make; although choice implies options, it is clear that the hero's options are severely limited. And although the subject of these words is marriage, Hamlet's choice with regard to revenge will dominate the play.

The Ghost's subsequent appearance to Hamlet poses the problem clearly: the Ghost of old King Hamlet has returned to reveal how

. . . the whole ear of Denmark
Is by a forged process of my death
Rankly abus'd. . . .

(1.5.36-38)

The Ghost urges action:

Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
A couch for luxury and damned incest.

(1.5.82-3)

Despite Eleanor Prosser's arguments in *Hamlet and Revenge* that the Ghost is an evil spirit sent to tempt Hamlet to damnation, the audience and Hamlet himself accept this visitor as the Ghost of Hamlet's father.

All of the characters in the play, including Claudius, agree that old Hamlet was a good man; why then does he return to urge revenge? Christianity teaches believers to love their enemies, to do good to those who hurt them, to turn the other cheek. Yet revenge has coexisted with Christianity for centuries. Death and sin have always been involved with the plans of Providence, as the central story of the New Testament, the narrative of Christ's redemptive passion and death, suggests. In fact, if the Ghost's visit is part of a divine plan, Hamlet's "revenge" will not be simply an act of sinful passion: the revenge becomes necessary if the "something rotten in the state of Denmark" (1.4.90) is to be eliminated.

The Ghost has come from Purgatory; several sixteenth-century books on Purgatory use the word *revenge* as a synonym for *purge*. In these texts, "the meaning of revenge is that of purifying or purging the effects of sin."[5] In its entries for *revenge* both as a noun and as a verb, the *OED* lists *punishment*, *chastisement*, *to punish*, *to exact punishment* as obsolete meanings. One example of the verb cited by the *OED* is from the 1611 Authorized Version of the Bible which translates Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 5.3 as "The Lord will surely revenge thy pride."

The Ghost himself is a spirit trapped between what were once called the particular and the general judgments; it is suffering for its sins,

> . . . confin'd to fast in fires,
> Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
> Are burnt and purg'd away.
>
> (1.5.10-12)

This meaning of revenge points forward to the discussion of Claudius's anger over *The Murder of Gonzago*; Hamlet observes to Guildenstern that "for me to put him [Claudius] to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into more choler" (3.2.297-99).

In his "Introduction" to the Arden edition of the play, Harold Jenkins observes that "the command to revenge, coming from father to son and not one for nature to resist, is enforced by a power beyond nature in which it would seem that heaven and hell conjoin." The Ghost's visitation makes clear that even good King Hamlet was a sinner. For Professor Jenkins, indeed, "the essential subject of *Hamlet* . . . is . . . the intermingling of good and evil in all life."[6]

Yet Hamlet clearly recognizes in the Ghost's message the gravity of his *public* responsibility. Laertes's words in 1.3, "subject to his birth," echo at the close of act I when Hamlet, reflecting on the Ghost's awful report, cries:

> The time is out of joint. O cursed spite,
> That ever I was born to set it right.
>
> (1.5.196-97)

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[5] Christopher Devlin, *Hamlet's Divinity and Other Essays* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963), p. 46.

[6] Harold Jenkins, Edited, with Introduction and Longer Notes, *Hamlet*, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1982), pp. 155, 156, 157.

Through the next three acts Hamlet strives, unsuccessfully, to "set the time right." The Ghost has told Hamlet:

> If thou didst ever thy dear father love. . . .
> Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.
> (1.5.23,25)

And later,

> If thou has nature in thee, bear it not,
> . . . .
> But howsomever thou pursuest this act . . .
> (1.5.81,84)

"Howsoever thou pursuest this act": Hamlet recognizes from the start that such revenge will have profound consequences, and not just for him and his mother. But he operates under the delusion that the revenge must be instigated and carried out by him alone.

Therefore, although Hamlet recognizes that he is not merely a private avenger, he fails to act because he thinks that he alone is responsible for the task. Hamlet's future as king and his role as avenger distinguish him from other men; but he remains very much a human being. As long as he strives alone, or with only Horatio as confidant, he fails to "set the time right." As long as he tries, like other men, to make his will his fate, Hamlet fails. Only after his harrowing sea voyage does Hamlet come to accept the fate that he shares with every man. Only then does he understand that he cannot, as Laertes has argued in 1.3.20, "carve for himself." In the last act of the play, Hamlet recognizes that Providence is the principal architect of human affairs, that there is "special providence in the fall of a sparrow" (5.2.215-16). Once he accepts his role as an agent of Providence, Hamlet succeeds in his revenge; he "sets the time right."

In the course of the play, Hamlet moves from the despair of the first soliloquy, delivered just before he learns of the Ghost, to the acceptance and serenity of his words in act 5, "the readiness is all" (5.2.218). An essential part of Hamlet's development as a character is his recognition that man is flawed; he recognizes the flaw, in terminology I borrow from the late Dame Rebecca West,[7] not only horizontally, in space, in the closed world of Elsinore and at sea, but also vertically, running through time, in the sins of his own father, "Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin, / Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd" (1.5.76-77), and in the myth of Troy as recalled by the Player in act 2. Most importantly, Hamlet comes to accept the combination of Hyperion and satyr in himself; in fact, after he has murdered Polonius he has become the very thing he loathes:

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[7] Rebecca West, *The Court and the Castle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 17-32.

> For this same lord
> I do repent; but heaven hath pleas'd it so,
> To punish me with this and this with me,
> That I must be their scourge and minister.
> I will bestow him and will answer well
> The death I gave him . . . .
> This bad begins, and worse remains behind.
>
> (3.4.174-79, 181)

II

The second providential visitation occurs in the second movement of the tragedy, the lengthy central section in which Claudius and Hamlet seek each to expose the other. Here the Players focus plot and theme in their role as providential visitors. They are "coted . . . on the way," reports Rosencrantz, "and hither are they come to offer you service" (2.2.316-17). Note that they come to offer service not to Claudius but to the prince, and Hamlet's immediate response is: "He that plays the king shall be welcome" (2.1.318).

When the Players arrive a short time later, Hamlet especially wishes to hear "Aeneas' tale to Dido—and thereabout of it especially when he speaks of Priam's slaughter" (2.2.442-44), of the death of a king. Hamlet himself begins the speech with its picture of Pyrrhus, all in black, like Hamlet at the beginning of the play. Also like Hamlet, Pyrrhus is bent upon revenge; he is a son determined to punish those who destroyed his father Achilles. The audience will note the resemblance, even in the matter of delay, when Pyrrhus hesitates briefly before completing the murder of Priam. Professor Jenkins characterizes the speech as a "reproduction of the play's basic motifs in exaggerated form" (479).

The element in the speech which captures Hamlet's imagination is the power of Hecuba's lament, the emotions the player conveys being

> . . . all for nothing!
> For Hecuba!
> What's Hecuba to him, or he to her,
> That he should weep for her? What would he do
> Had he the motive and the cue for passion
> That I have?
>
> (2.2.551-56)

Just as act 1 ended with Hamlet's reaction to the Ghost's message, "The time is out of joint," so act 2 concludes with his plan of action inspired by the unexpected visit of the Players: "The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King" (2.2.600-01). It is noticeable that several of Hamlet's major soliloquies, his self-conscious considerations of his situation, surround these visitations.

The providential visitation of the Players continues into act 3. During Francesco's watch at the beginning of the play there may not be even a mouse stirring, but *The Mousetrap* certainly stirs reactions; it functions as the central focus of the play. "Aeneas' tale to Dido" serves as a kind of prologue to the play-within-the-play. The dumb-show reenacts the crime which has made Denmark rotten. Unlike the dialogue between the players which follows, it is a complete representation of the evil deed. In the dialogue, the Player King demurs when his Queen insists that she would never remarry if he should die:

> I do believe you think what now you speak;
> But what we do determine, oft we break.
> . . . .
> What to ourselves in passion we propose,
> The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.
> . . . .
> Our wills and fates do so contrary run
> That our devices still are overthrown:
> Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.
> (3.2.181-82, 189-90, 206-07)

Like Laertes' words to Ophelia, the Player King's speech has meaning far beyond its context. The Player Queen, like Hamlet himself at this stage of his awareness, rejects the Player King's contention that human beings do not possess complete control over their destinies, that will and fate do not always coincide. She protests:

> Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife,
> If, once a widow, ever I be wife.
> (3.2.217-18)

The killer in this play is Lucianus, whom Hamlet pointedly identifies as "nephew to the King" (3.2.239). In other words, Lucianus images Claudius as murderer, but he also represents Hamlet himself in the same role.

For Hamlet and Horatio, Claudius's abrupt departure is final confirmation of his guilt. For the court, Claudius's reaction seems to be justifiable anger at his nephew's implied threat upon his life. Indeed, the specter of nephew murdering uncle leads directly to Rosencrantz's cliche about "the cess of majesty" in the next scene (3.3.15ff). Delivering lines that apply more aptly to both Hamlets than to the usurper Claudius, Rosencrantz concludes: "Never / Did the King sigh, but with a general groan" (3.3.23). The courtiers see a distorted picture in which Hamlet is the potential murderer and usurper.

Most remarkable, however, is the impact of *The Murder of Gonzago* upon Claudius. Confronted with his guilty deed, he realizes without doubt that Hamlet somehow knows of his crime. He therefore presses forward with a plan he has already announced to Polonius: Hamlet will be sent to England since "madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go" (3.1.190). Left alone to deliver a soliloquy matched in length and complexity only by those of the hero himself, Claudius's 'will' to have Hamlet destroyed in England will be thwarted by the workings of providential destiny.

In a daring stroke, Shakespeare deliberately juxtaposes Claudius's meditation on the nature of repentance and God's mercy against Hamlet's vicious desire to damn his uncle's soul. If, as the Player King has suggested, Providence does not allow us to will our own fates, how much less does Providence allow us to will the fate of another, as Hamlet here proposes to do. The audience is thus drawn to sympathize with the villain and to worry over the behavior of the hero, even as it recognizes that Claudius's prayer is useless.

The play-within-the-play has driven Hamlet from one extreme to the other, from the torpor of the earlier scenes to the bloody passion he displays when he refuses to kill Claudius at prayer. Here and in the following scene, when he murders Polonius, Hamlet becomes "passion's slave" (3.2.72), even though, just before the play-within-the-play, he has praised Horatio for avoiding such excess.

The Players, then, in their visitation have indeed held "the mirror up to nature" (3.2.22) and shown it to be both evil—in the raging Pyrrhus, in the wife who "doth protest too much" (3.2.225), in the scheming Lucianus—and good—in the loyal Hecuba and in the sensitive Player King. Reactions to the play range from the savage, evil passion of Hamlet's "Now could I drink hot blood" (3.2.381) to the healthy, if momentary, remorse demonstrated in Claudius's confrontation of his guilt.

The Ghost makes his final appearance as Hamlet rants against Claudius in the manner of the earlier soliloquies; he calls Claudius "a murderer and a villain" (3.4.96) while Polonius's body probably lies in full view of the audience, an ironic statement of Hamlet's own villainy.[8] As in his original appearance to Hamlet, the Ghost emphasizes the need for action:

> Do not forget. This visitation
> Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
>
> (3.4.110-11)

And the Ghost also repeats his earlier solicitude for Gertrude.

III

The third providential visitor in the play is Hamlet himself. The hero leaves the corrupt world of Elsinore shortly after his conversation with his mother. Still in Denmark, he watches Fortinbras and his army en route to Poland. This "visitation" prompts Hamlet's final soliloquy, in which he continues to delude himself that the revenge will be accomplished on his terms, when he chooses. However, the Hamlet who later returns to Elsinore knows what he is doing; the tormented introversion and self-doubt of the soliloquies, like the soliloquies themselves, have vanished.

As in the earlier visitations, Hamlet's return is unexpected and is not really the result of human action. The return begins, according to Hamlet himself, when "in my heart there was a kind of fighting/ That would not let me sleep" (5.2.4-5). This premonition is remarkably similar to that which strikes Hamlet just before his fatal encounter with Laertes, "Thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart" (5.2.208-09), or when Hamlet exclaims on hearing the Ghost's disclosure of the murder, "O my prophetic soul! My uncle!" (1.5.41).

On the sea voyage, however, the "fighting" in Hamlet's heart leads him to the rash action of unsealing the grand commission of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and thus he discovers Claudius's evil intent. The "divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will" (5.2.10-11) provides Hamlet with his father's signet, "Which was the model of that Danish seal" (5.2.50), so he is able to prepare a new commission which will lead to the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Heaven again seems ordinant on the next day of the voyage, when pirates attack Hamlet's ship; he displays great courage in boarding the pirate vessel: "On the instant they got clear of our ship, so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy" (4.6.17-19).

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[8] W.F. Trench noted this juxtaposition in *Shakespeare's Hamlet: A New Commentary* (1913), according to Clifford Leech, "Studies in *Hamlet*, 1901-1955," in *Aspects of Hamlet*, eds. Kenneth Muir and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 3.

Through a series of remarkable circumstances during the sea voyage, Hamlet returns to Denmark. Many commentators have observed his change of mood, evident in the attitudes he displays in the graveyard and especially in his method of identifying himself to the mourners around Ophelia's grave: "This is I, / Hamlet the Dane" (5.1.250-51). As he makes clear to Horatio, he returns still determined

> To quit him [Claudius] with this arm . . . is't not to be damn'd
> To let this canker of our nature come
> In further evil?
>
> (5.2.68-70)

Hamlet still has no plan for accomplishing the revenge, but he now recognizes that he is part of a larger purpose. Moments before the duel, Hamlet agrees to Claudius's wager, telling the lord who reinforces Osric's mission: "I am constant to my purposes, they follow the King's pleasure" (5.2.197-98). Surely here as so often in the play, language reverberates beyond the immediate context: Hamlet cannot know what is about to happen, but "his purposes," of course, follow the dead King his father's "pleasure" in the destruction of the usurper.

The Providence that broods over Shakespeare's tragedy is fond of irony. The Ghost, the first providential visitor, inspires fears that it is evil because it is a "dreaded sight" (1.1.28), an "illusion" (1.1.130) that disappears when the cock crows and that speaks from the "hell" under the stage; nevertheless, the Ghost is not so much evil as it is the informant about evil. The Players, the second providential visitors, come to Elsinore presumably to provide entertainment; instead, they become a key element in the unfolding tragedy. Hamlet, the third providential visitor, delays and fails in his mission as long as he thinks that he alone is responsible for its success; he achieves his mission once he recognizes the role of Providence.

IV

The irony of the providential action in the play is perhaps most notable in the case of the last visitor, Fortinbras. The Norwegian prince is present to the action from the very beginning, intent as he is upon recovering lands lost in battle by his father to Hamlet's father; like Hamlet, Laertes and Pyrrhus, he is a son seeking revenge. The aggressive troublemaker of act 1 is transformed in act 5 into the "character who picks up the pieces" at the end of a tragedy. In act 1, Fortinbras has "Shark'd up a list of lawless resolutes" (1.1.101) in order to attack Denmark; in act 5, he wins the whole kingdom without firing a shot.

To conclude, I would argue that the structure of the play, specifically in its providential visitations, allows us to perceive Providence at work from the start. Like ancient Greeks at a performance of *Oedipus the King,* we come to *Hamlet* already knowing what will happen, and part of the pleasure of the dramatic irony lies in these providential visitations. Inscrutable Providence permits Hamlet, virtually by accident, to succeed in his revenge, to become Shakespeare's only "successful" tragic hero. But he succeeds only at the cost of seven lives in addition to his own.

Tragedy is, after all, a perception of the universe through human eyes, and the visitors I have examined all confront us with humanity's limitations. None of these agents of Providence, not even the Ghost, can escape the human condition, the human delusion that 'will' can determine fate. As a dutiful son, Hamlet gets revenge, but we are painfully aware as the play ends that Hamlet's own flawed humanity is at least partially responsible for the deaths of so many. *Sub specie aeternitatis,* as agent of Providence, Hamlet removes the rottenness from Denmark and "sets the time right."

Hamlet and *Samson Agonistes*

S. HOMCHAUDHURI

> I tell you, captain, if you look in the maps of the 'orld, I warrant you shall find, in the comparisons between Macedon and Monmouth that the situations, look you, is both alike. There is a river in Macedon; and there is also moreover a river at Monmouth: it is called Wye at Monmouth; but it is out of my prains what is the name of the other river; but 'tis all one, 'tis alike as my fingers, and there is salmons in both.
>
> (*Henry V*, 4.7)

Approaching works of art, one cannot be sure that one is not seeing points of similarity as Fluellen does in the above passage, and the danger of landing up in absurd banalities is all too real. The absurdly external parallelism that recommends itself to Fluellen is totally absent when one looks at *Hamlet* and *Samson Agonistes*. They are almost antipodal and belong to two different worlds, as it were. The differences are so sharp and decisive as to call for a dismissal of any attempt at seeing any points that there might be in common. However, it might not be altogether unrewarding trying to pinpoint some remarkably similar configurations lying concealed beneath the stark dissimilarities between these two remarkable works of art. We hope we will not be concerned with "gay comparisons" such as Antony dismisses indignantly in favour of what he considers a juster comparison between himself and Caesar (*Antony and Cleopatra*, 3.13). Let us begin with the differences.

Hamlet presents a world substantially cut off from the anchorage of medieval thought, like a ship whose captaincy has been usurped through foul treachery and which is inwardly rotting, though only in the eyes of the discerning. God is further away than He ever was from man's thought in earlier ages. The certainty of a living faith and a secure clarity of vision have disappeared in the uncertainty and disquiet of a scarcely perceived providence. It is a bedimmed world where the rule of reason which ensures moral and spiritual health in the life of the community and the individual has been undermined almost beyond correction and recovery.

It is a pronouncedly secular world in which the hero, the victim of appalling circumstances, was once the model of a soldier, scholar, courtier – a man of the world with singular worldly accomplishments.

Even when in the grip of an unsettling trauma as he is now, he gives convincing evidence of what must have been, in the earlier days of normality, a keen, full-blooded participation in the varied affairs of life, remaining equally at home in the world of 'emperor and clown', of men of all stations. Hamlet is at home with the soldier. the player, the grave-digger, the courtier. He is, or let us say was, a lover. He is a scholar, a thinker, a poet. He is equal to any situation, whether of his own making (witness 'the play within the play' scene) or of some one else's. A master of rhetoric, of quibbling. of poetry, of mind-boggling thought, he is versatile, answering to the versatility of interests such as only the Renaissance knew.

The play involves the tragic and the comic, the sublime and the profane, the beautiful and the macabre. It involves the crudest melodrama and human thought at its intensest. The hero contemplates the paradox that is man and is himself a paradox. He is at once impulsive, wilful, ratiocinative and profound. In spite of the fixation that haunts him and bedevils his proceeding, such is the variety and amplitude of his mind that he finds himself responding with obvious zest to every happening around him. His psychic agony does not diminish his vitality in any significant manner. He is no statue-like jilted lover or petrified son of an incestuous mother.

The play is a world which, apart from the main thoroughfare, is full of lanes and by-lanes suggesting the excitedly varied interests and the complex fulness of life the Renaissance epitomised. Its scope connects earth and heaven and hell, but it is not set in one exclusive framework. Both pagan and Christian elements connect. Such is the manipulation of the situational potential and the psychological thrust that characters are kept painfully guessing at the true import of situations. This results in the provocative mysteriousness that is the keynote of a milieu which imprisons man as though in a mist and which in the process of dramatisation brings out tellingly what Keats saw as Shakespeare's supreme gift, viz, his negative capability—the power to remain in a state of uncertainty, doubt and anxiety "without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." The dramatist's ability to probe and to variegate appeal at the popular and sophisticated levels easily distinguish this play from the less bustling and more exclusively focussed drama of the ancients and of Milton.

Milton's *Samson Agonistes,* very much like his *Paradise Lost*, is set within the medieval framework of the God-man relationship. It suggests the certainty of God and the medieval sense of man's nearness to God. The lapsed man's eclipsed sense of the immediacy of God's presence is only an ironic device used to dramatise the living reality of God being where He is not suspected to be and being ever mindful of his devotee or champion. Samson is God-intoxicated, and in that sense a monomaniac and whatever concern he has for his nation is prompted by his sense of accountability to God. Indeed, Milton is out to justify the ways of God to man. His hero does not recognise anything as of value unless it has an explicit relevance to his mission as God's champion on earth. This explains the character of the work and the method that Milton adopts to realise his aim. Much of what Shakespeare needs is superfluous or almost blasphemous to him. He needs only a narrowed arena, and he will keep to the thoroughfare, being contemptuous of lanes and by-lanes which can only provide criminal diversion from the urgent need to vindicate. He has no use for an appeal at the popular level, for unlike in Shakespeare, people, by and large, are a contemptible quantity. The Renaissance multiplicity of human concerns gives way to the exclusive concern of man seeking his God, for this seeking is what matters to the exclusion of everything else. And whenever God and the world are mentioned in the same breath, the former takes precedence over the latter.

What is in question in *Hamlet* is the status of man and the credibility of reason as of potency enough to sustain man's superiority over the animal world, while what is of overriding importance in *Samson Agonistes* is man's accountability to his maker. The nature of vindication at the end of Milton's work sets off, as nothing else could so tellingly, Hamlet's sense of being cut off prematurely. He has lamentably not been allowed the time to render a true account of all that has gone before, so that his people remain "unsatisfied." For him death marks no triumph. The "fell sergeant" has denied him the time he needed ("Had I but time"). Still another point is that the world of *Samson Agonistes* is remarkably incident-free except at the end, unlike that of *Hamlet* which is packed with a variety of incidents. The closed world of the court is conterpointed by the bustle of life.

Such differences are likely to preclude any scope for a worth-while comparative study involving perceptions of kinship. Nevertheless, below the surface one can see some striking similarities between *Samson Agonistes* and *Hamlet*, and the resemblances strike one as all the more revealing on account of the over-all divergencies in conception and execution.

Samson is literally in enemy territory and in prison. Hamlet is virtually in enemy territory and in prison. Claudius talks of Hamlet's "transformation," but thanks to the appalling transformation brought about by fratricide, Hamlet finds himself an alien in his own land. There was a divine secret imparted to Samson who, having divulged it in a weak, unguarded moment, now bewails his apostasy. To Hamlet, too, a dread secret has been entrusted, but, unlike Samson, he has kept the sanctity of it. Hamlet's present predicament is due to an act of treachery on the part of his uncle and infidelity on the part of his mother coupled with obtuseness on the part of Ophelia. In a manner not entirely dissimilar, Samson's bondage and his blinded state have been brought about by treachery on the part of his own people, especially Dalilah. Samson's wife acts as a tool in the hands of his enemy so that he stands alienated and betrayed. Hamlet's mother has gone over to the usurper, being guilty of marital apostasy, while his erstwhile friends have become tools of his enemy. Both Hamlet and Samson condemn the untrustworthy character of women as a class. Hamlet's fury and sarcasm in the nunnery and closet scenes bear a striking family resemblance to Samson's explosive denunciation of women in his encounter with Dalilah. The cynicism epitomised in the formulation "frailty, thy name is woman" is not far removed in temper from Samson's vitriolic denunciation of woman as a "poisonous bosom-snake."

The fortunes of both protagonists touch the nadir of despair and both resort to self-laceration, the discrepant nature of the causes notwithstanding. A feeling of inadequacy, of not being equal to the occasion demoralises both for a while. Samson is borne down by a sense of the inscrutability of God's ways, Hamlet by a sense of the sphinx-like mystery of life and death. Both reflect mournfully on the paradox that is man—how he is at once the glory and the shame of creation. Both lament the enslavement of reason by passion. And in both the plays crippling doubt eventually gives way to rejuvenating faith. While this statement might seem too strong and categorical to be applied to the Hamlet world, the fact remains that what had seemed difficult, almost impossible of attainment comes within easy reach when the muddy stream of scepticism merges in the rising tide of belief. The thread that had snapped is joined again. The exiled man is restored. (This restoration is peculiarly valid for Samson, while for Hamlet it can only be construed as a sudden upswing stopping short of yielding complete fulfilment. He has a sense of being snatched away before his time. The vision of man at odds with the existential situation abides. The world remains till the end "out of joint." The restoration we are talking of is of ephemeral effect almost like that of a mirage).

In spite of the caveat thus entered for *Hamlet*, it will be noticed that Hamlet and Samson both get their revenge with a measure of unexpectedness, the accomplishment of the task (however unsatisfactory for Hamlet) being rather slow to come. In either case, there are two phases—in the first phase, ie., the phase of alienation and sterility, the protagonist is groping, questioning and whiplashing himself in enveloping darkness. In the second phase, ie., the phase of recovery, he has reached the healing waters of faith, leaving sterility behind. For both, the process is one of graduation from a state of spiritual crisis. Both Shakespeare and Milton dramatise the growth of the soul, its upward swing. Paradoxically, there could be nothing more unexpected than Hamlet's resounding claim in the final scene:

> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will.

He is settled in mind and will respond to the King's summons, even when Horatio counsels caution. Not dissimilar is Samson's sudden thrust of mind:

> I begin to feel
> Some rousing motions in me, which dispose
> To something extraordinary my thoughts.

Samson's "presage" ("If there be aught of presage in the mind") echoes Hamlet's "augury" ("Not a whit, we defy augury: there's special providence in the fall of a sparrow").

These miracles of utterance acquire their electrifying effect, their substance, indeed their anthenticity from the enormity of the suffering borne and the resulting growth of the soul.

"The soldier on guard who cannot leave his post until he is relieved or given permission from above, is a metaphor for the soul in this world which comes very easily to Renaissance writers."[1] The conception is of a sentinel ever awake and watchful, holding to his appointed station without a thought of yielding to the foe. Both Hamlet and Samson are such sentinels and they are conceived remarkably alike. Whereas Hamlet proves true to the conception in holding his fort (the privacy of his soul and the dourness of his vision of man), defeating all attempts at despoiling him of his secret and making inroads on his preserves, Samson proves guilty of a criminal slackening of vigilance, resulting in the enemy lapping up his secret, and in his impotence and present ignominy. Hence, the unremitting self-chastisement and hence, in Dalila's words, "the eternal tempest never to be calmed."

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[1] Helen Gardner, *The Business of Criticism*, (London: Oxford Paper backs, 1963), p. 49.

In charactristic Renaissance imagery, Milton represents his protagonist's failure to be worthy of his charge.

How could I once look up, or heave the head
Who like a foolish *pilot*, have ship-wracked
My *vessel* trusted to me from above
Gloriously rigged, and for a word, a tear,
Fool! have divulged the secret gift of God
To a deceitful woman?

(italics added)

Again, changing the image, yet retaining the suggestion:

What boots it at one *gate* to make *defence*,
And at another let in the *foe*,
Effiminately vanquished?

(italics added)

The soldier-image in *Hamlet* which must have been a conscious part of the over-all dramatic conception comes through convincingly in Fortinbras's speech at the end:

Let four captains
Bear Hamlet like a *soldier* to the stage;
For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have prov'd most royal: and, for his passage,
The *soldier's* music and the rite of war
Speak loudly for him.

(italics added)

Even when Hamlet proves invulnerable as a soldier at his post, he fights constantly under the threat of a siege. He can see evil masquerading as virtue while "rank corruption mining all within / Infects unseen!"

The eoneeption of a soldier given a solemn charge is reinforced by the following description given by Manoa of a rejuvenated Samson as he visualises the situation:

And I persuade me God hath not permitted
His strength again to grow up with his hair
Garrisoned round about him like a camp
Of faithful soldiery.

(italics added)

The overwhelming feeling of the ubiquity of defilement is germane to the visions worked out in the two works. Both protagonists are victims of an unclean regime. Samson's feeling of being tainted and unclean is all too palpable and he has the additional feeling of having brought it upon himself through sinning. While Hamlet is innocent of any such offence as Samson accuses himself of, he is not free either from the sense of guilt. As he reflects on his situation, he unavoidably has a share of the corruption that has gone deep into the human stock ("virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it"). "With more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in," Hamlet too feels tainted and sick. He calls himself an "arrant knave."

Conceived as God's champion, Samson eventually turns out to be the cleanser that he was destined to be. What about Hamlet? One notices an atavistic tendency that Shakespeare implants in his hero. Could it be that in his awe-struck allusion to Hercules in his first soliloquy, he was, however unconsciously, glancing at the cleanser-image of that mythical hero? Could it be that Shakespeare made him recognise, however dimly, a compulsive, if intimidating, intimation from the conjuration of that puissant pagan image? In other words, could it be that Shakespeare had all but cast him in that role only to see how in his vision of the dismembered time, such a role would turn out to be? Hamlet's habitual language with reference to the corruption of the time is of one who looks upon himself as a possible cleanser, purifier. Habitually he thinks of and harps on the general corruption, the rotting of the state rather than the single act of treacherous murder which could be more of a symptom than the cause of the ever-spreading malady. He generalises the evil and its destructive character so that the world is "an unweeded garden, / That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature / Possess it merely." The often-noticed generalising bent of Hamlet goes well with, in fact, gives point to, his projected role of redeemer, however dismayed in spirit he may feel, contemplating his task:

The time is out of joint. O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!

In the last act Hamlet asks Horatio if it is "not to be damn'd / To let this canker of our nature come / In further evil." He is thinking with revulsion and horror of the further harm that might issue from Claudius and he is thinking not merely of the murder of his father but also of the staining of his mother, of being deprived of his claim to the throne and of the treacherous design on his life. His concern is how 'not to be damn'd' and how to extirpate this spreading evil, The debasement of the situation brought about by sin is focused on in both works by a similarity of means. Both Shakespeare and Milton make use of divine imagery, of the contrast between a greater and a lesser divinity to emphasise the almost immeasurable gulf between the present and the past, between what was and what is, between the radiance that was and its monstrous eclipse. Hamlet refers to the past splendour and the present monstrosity in terms of Hyperion and Satyr:

> But two months dead! Nay not so much, not two:
> So excellent a king; that was to this
> Hyperion to a Satyr.

In the closet scene, he speaks to his mother:

> Look here upon this picture and on this,
> . . . .
> See what a grace was seated on this brow;
> Hyperion's curls; . . .
> Look you now what follows
> Here is your husband, like a mildew'd ear
> Blasting his wholesome brother.

The Hyperion-Satyr antithesis symbolises the Renaissance antithesis of reason and passion; the triumph of Satyr over Hyperion signifies the displacement of reason and the usurpation of its rightful place by passion standing for inordinate ambition, greed, lechery. The insurrection within man overthrowing the rational soul and thus overturning the hierarchy of elements has unleashed the reign of evil.

In *Hamlet* the earlier period is spoken of in terms such as "fair and war-like," "majesty" and "dignity," "hallowed and gracious," "our valiant Hamlet." Hamlet's loving and wistful reference to his dead father ("He was a man, take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again") is an anguished tribute to a reign of reason never to return. The present dispensation is that of an "incestuous and adulterate beast."

Milton, likewise, drives home Samson's unforeseen subjection to the present abomination in terms of the eclipse of Israel's God and the ascendance of Dagon, the abhored Philistine God. The present dispensation is a witness to Dagon reigning in "pomp," and to "dishonour" and "obloquy" brought to Israel's God.

> All the contest is now
> 'Twixt God and Dagon. Dagon hath presumed,

Me overthrown, to enter lists with God,
His deity comparing and preferring
Before the God of Abraham.

The present regime "drunk with idolatry, drunk with wine" is an abomination not unlike the one presided over by the Satyr-king, Claudius.

The glory that characteristed the rule of Israel's God is represented by Samson when he was in full possession of reason and in full consciousness of that power which was transmitted to him from above. And the rise of Dagon is accounted for by Samson letting himself be ruled by passion that made a captive of reason.

Shakespeare and Milton dwell upon conjugal infidelity and stress the deification of lust and treachery as the cause and accompaniment of the reigns respectively of Satyr and Dagon. The protagonists are trapped and menaced. The feeling of being encircled and thus imperilled expresses itself in language that is significantly similar. Hamlet talks of being "benetted round with villainies." And Samson wails:

Ye see, O friends,
How many evils have enclosed me round.

Both undergo the tortures of the damned. Both are severe upon themselves for being "lapsed" souls, though for different reasons. Hamlet sees himself as one "lapsed in time and passion" for having unforgivably put off "the important acting of thy dread command," while Samson feels "bereaved," "exiled," even "annulled" for having "profaned / The mystery of God, given me under pledge / Of vow."

The points of similarity embrace other aspects as well. In spite of the obvious difference in their dramatic roles, Gertrude and Manoa would seem to have a similarity of approach towards the suffering protagonists. Gertrude, notwithstanding being the cause of Hamlet's crisis of being, continues to love him and would like to see him happy in her own placid way. In fact, it pains her to find her son so unlike his former self, almost transformed beyond recognition—a melancholy, bitter and tortured soul. She wants him to get reconciled to his father's passing as an inevitable happening in a man's life, accept the changed situation and resume his former self when he was the "observed of all observers," as Ophelia puts it. To be fair to Gertrude, she is unaware of the fact that Claudius has treacherously got her former husband out of his way. On the other hand, epicureanism and lust have rendered her insensitive enough not to realise that her marriage to Claudius so soon after her former husband's death could cause such disquiet in Hamlet's mind.

Not only is Manoa ever ready to ingratiate himself with the Philistine lords to secure Samson's release, he even advises his son to prefer "self-preservation" to being "self-rigorous," "choosing death as due":

I already have made way
To some Philistine lords, with whom to treat
about thy ransom
. . . .
Repent the sin; but if the punishment
Thou canst avoid, self-preservation bids.

Both Gertrude and Manoa represent obtuseness of moral vision. While Manoa represents the spirit of compromise with evil for the sake of worldly comfort and ease, Gertrude is all self-indulgence which, for its uninterrupted proceeding, fears any questioning posture which Hamlet seems to represent. In Gertrude one sees gross, if bland, sensuality asking for approval and acceptance. In both plays, then, the parent symbol is a means of spelling out the unbridgeable gulf between the myopia of mundane gratification and a terrifying insistence on being true to the rightful image of man.

Yet in another respect, one can see a nearly identical thrust. Hamlet's attitude to the two spies, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, is almost on all fours with Samson's attitude to the "thirty spies" "appointed to await me." Justifying the murder of those spies, Samson says:

I used hostility, and took their spoil,
To pay my underminers, in their coin.

Anticipating what he is going to do to the two former school-follows whom he will trust "as I will adders fang'd" because of their being in league with the villainous King, Hamlet chuckles:

Let it work;
For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
Hoist with his own petard: and't shall go hard
But I will delve one yard below their mines,
And blow them at the moon.

Later, justifying his action in sending them to their death in England, Hamlet puts the matter in decisive perspective, using an argument Samson himself might approve of:

Why, man, they did make love to this employment;
They are not near my conscience; their defeat
Does by their own insinuation grow.

Both Shakespeare and Milton seem to have apprehended remarkably similar situations though their artistic enactments took on widely different expressions because of their distinctive world-views and the compulsions of their pronouncedly individual talents and temperaments. Indeed, we have already alluded to the basic differences.

At this point we must glance at some other disparities. Both Hamlet and Samson are obsessed with death, yet their approaches to it are sharply different. The difference here is a difference between Shakespeare and Milton. The thought of death is natural to a tortured soul. But while Shakespeare harbours the idea from time to time, he cannot persist in doing so for long, for death is an insoluble enigma. However painful and unbearable life may be, the thought of death affords no assurance that it will be a better state of affairs when one has wound up the business of life. No such sense of mystery troubles Milton who is fortified by his dogma and his faith. Shakespeare does not seem to know either, at any rate when he is composing his *Hamlet*. He is a tormented and unresting quester. He is an open-eyed questioner subject to the fears natural to a man who would probe the beyond unfettered by prescriptive dogma:

Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will.

Contrast this with how Milton's hero longs for death:

This one prayer yet remains, might I be heard,
No long petition, speedy death,
The close of all my miseries and the balm.

Hamlet sees an unknown "dread" in death; Samson knows no such perplexity. He welcomes death within the religious framework, the framework of faith.

Shakespeare's play suggests the philosophy of growth. His belief in growth is true not only of the central figures of his plays but also of the minor characters. Gertrude is certainly different at the end of the closet scene. She can be supposed to have felt some stirrings of a moral awakening:

> Be thou assur'd, if words be made of breath
> And breath of life, I have no life to breathe
> What thou hast said to me.

Laertes who has been in league with the king, wakes up at the end of the play to the evil of his proceeding, disowns Claudius, exchanges forgiveness with Hamlet and befriends him. This fact of moral growth is in complete contrast with the staticity of Manoa and Dalilah. Manoa's complacency is incorrigible while Dalilah remains self-righteous till the end.

Unlike Milton, Shakespeare takes us inside his characters. He lets us hear what the characters think or say to themselves behind the facade of their public selves. Thus we hear Claudius confess, express remorse and ask for God's pardon, although he knows that the retention of the fruits of his crime cannot entitle him to pardon. We hear him praise Hamlet:

> . . . he, being remiss,
> Most generous, and free from all contriving,
> Will not peruse the foils.

Milton's cast of mind and art are such that he cannot afford us such insights into the character of, say, Harapha or Dalilah. We only encounter their public selves. Claudius's private admiration for Hamlet glances at and is in line with Iago's secret acknowledgement of Othello's goodness and candour:

> The Moor is of a free and open nature,

and Edmund's private view of Edgar:

> . . . . a brother noble,
> Whose nature is so far from doing harms
> That he suspects none.

Such utterances constitute an individual trait of Shakespeare's art. They point to and intimate his rounded view of life. One cannot but notice his pervasive ambivalence—the multiple perspectives under which the characters and the wide world in which they move are viewed. This ambivalence is reflective of the dramatist's profound recognition of the mystery of life—life that is many-layered and many-faceted and which refuses to be seen against one set perspective. Plurality of vision is the unstated law of the Shakespearean world.

Despite the overtly religious background, Greek drama would seem to be more akin to Shakespearean drama in its focus on and intensification of the basic mystery of life. Both work out in their unique ways the needling awareness of the dimness and ambiguity of human perception and the fatal congruence of fate and character conspiring to weave man's tragic destiny.

And finally, the common, popular touch—an area where Shakespeare is *sui generis*—Milton has no use for the common people, "the common rout, / That wandering loose about, / Grow up and perish as the summer fly, / Heads without name, no more remembered." Look at the soldiers who introduce us to the *Hamlet* world, the players in whose unexpected company Hamlet forgets his melancholy, and the gravediggers whose natural, lusty accent holds Hamlet and reminds him of the elemental character of life and of the inevitability of death—it is such characters as they who provide the unique tang and savour of the Shakespearean milieu and create its enthralling ambience.

Hamlet in Japan—From Drama to Novel

YOSHIKO KAWACHI

Hamlet is one of the most popular Shakespearean plays in Japan. It has been translated, adapted, and staged repeatedly since the Meiji era. The process of the popularization of this tragedy seems to parallel the modernization of the Japanese drama, novel, and poetry. In my article I will describe how Japanese novelists received *Hamlet* and how they enriched Japanese literature through their novelization of this drama. By studying their novelizations, I believe we can gain a greater understanding of the intellectual and literary development in Japan.

Before entering into the main discussion of my topic, I will sketch the chronological history of how *Hamlet* and some other Shakespearean plays were introduced to the Japanese public.

In 1871 Masanao Nakamura translated Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help*, a best seller during the period of enlightenment in the Meiji era. His translation of *Self-Help* provided a short biography of Shakespeare's life and included Polonius's advice to Laertes in *Hamlet:* "Neither a borrower nor a lender be, / For loan oft loses both itself and friend, / And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry" (1.3.75-77).[1]

In 1874 *The Japan Punch* published Charles Wirgman's curious translation of Hamlet's famous soliloquy. In 1875 Robun Kanagaki, a fiction-writer, published the plot of *Hamlet* in a newspaper. Eleven years later he revised the plot and rewrote it using *jōruri* (ballad-drama) style. His revised work was published in a newspaper in 1886.

In 1885 *The Merchant of Venice* was performed as a *Kabuki* play in Osaka. The title was changed to *Sakuradoki Zeni no Yononaka* ("The Season of Cherry-Blossoms, The World of Money").

The Japanese public in the early Meiji period became interested in the story of *Hamlet* because they felt they could learn about the customs and manners of Europeans by reading it. The public was not so interested in the play as drama. One reason is that Shakespeare's stories were introduced to the Japanese largely through translations of Charles Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. (Because of the public's apparent lack of interest in *Hamlet* as drama, Kanagaki had omitted Hamlet's soliloquy in his adaptation to *jōruri*.)

However, a nascent "good drama" movement began to direct the public's attention to the dramatical aspects of *Hamlet*. A Japanese journalist's article on Edwin Booth's performance of *Hamlet* in New York appeared in a weekly magazine in 1879. The article helped the public toward understanding the foreign stage.

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[1] The quotations are from *The New Cambridge Shakespeare*.

In 1881 or 1882 Shōichi Toyama, a professor at Tokyo University, attempted to do a literal translation of *Hamlet* into Japanese. He gave the translation, which he did not complete, the title, *Seiyō Jōruri: Reigen Oji no Adauchi* ("Western *Jōruri*: Revenge of an All-powerful Prince"). He was a distinguished scholar who studied in England and in the United States. In fact, he received his M.A. degree from the University of Michigan.

He was not a dramatist but he was deeply concerned with the "good drama" movement. A critic of Japanese drama, he was in the vanguard of scholars who pressed for the introduction of European dramaturgy into the Japanese theatre.

Comparing Japanese drama with European drama, he pointed out that the former consists of gesture and dialogue while the latter gives priority to the declamation or the expression of feelings and thought.[2] He also stressed the natural expression of life and mind in Hamlet's soliloquies.[3]

When he edited *Shaintaishishō*, an anthology of new-style poetry, with Ryōkichi Yatabe and Tetsujirō Inoue in 1882, he competed with Yatabe in translating the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy so that it conformed to the seven-and-five-syllable meter of Japanese verse.

Their translations profoundly influenced the younger poets of those days and stimulated their appetite for writing. For example, Tōkoku Kitamura, a romantic poet, wrote a dramatic poem, *Hōrai Kyoku* ("An Air from the Isle of Eternal Youth"), Tōson Shimazaki, a pioneer of Japanese naturalism as well as a romantic poet, wrote *Hikyoku: Biwahōshi* ("A Doleful Air: A Strolling Lutist"), and Hōmei Iwano wrote a play, *Tamaha Mayou Getchū no Yaiba* ("An Unlaid Ghost, A Sword in the Moon"). These men of letters were attracted by the troubled heart of Hamlet and sympathized with his philosophical questions. In this way, *Shintaishishō* contributed to the evaluation of *Hamlet* as pure literature as well as to the development of Japanese modern poetry.

The years from 1903 to 1911 witnessed a *Hamlet* boom, and the Japanese public enjoyed having several kinds of adaptations and translations. In 1903, Otojirō Kawakami and his company staged in Tokyo an adaptation of *Hamlet* by Kayō Yamagishi and Shunsho Doi. Although the story was changed to that of a tragedy of a contemporary nobleman's struggles, it was the first performance of *Hamlet* under its original title in Japan.

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[2] Toshio Kawatake, *Nippon no Hamuretto* ("Hamlet in Japan") (Tokyo: Nanso-sha, 1972), p. 132.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

Kawakami, who had been abroad several times, knew of the European stage and wanted to see improvements in dramatic presentations in Japan. However, he was above all a showman whose main concern was to introduce new plays to the Japanese public. His company had already performed *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello,* but he seemed not to understand the nature of Shakespearean plays because he omitted the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy in his stage presentation. We do not know why he eliminated the passage which had been translated by Yamagishi for his play-book, but it was probably because the actors of his company were unskilled at elocution. His production, however, was successful, and Yamagishi wrote another adaptation of *Hamlet* for *Kabuki* players later.

Koya Tozawa and Hyōkyo Asano completed a word-for-word translation of *Hamlet* in 1905, and published ten Shakespearean plays in the Japanese language. But it was Shōyō Tsubouchi (we usually refer to him by his first name) who for the first time translated the complete works of Shakespeare into Japanese.

When he was a student of Tokyo University, he received low marks in the examination given by Professor William Houghton. The question was, "Describe the character of Queen Gertrude," and Shōyō criticized her morality from his viewpoint of poetic justice. This experience must have given him an impetus to study Shakespeare. In 1884, he published his translation of *Julius Caesar* under the title of *Shīzaru Kidan: Jiyū no Tachi Nagori no Kireaji*, and in the following year he attempted to put Act I, Scene I of *Hamlet* into the Japanese language.

Shōyō's completed translation of *Hamlet* appeared in 1907 and it was staged at Hongō-za playhouse in Tokyo by the theatre troupe the Bungei Kyōkai which he founded. This time the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy was not omitted.

In May of 1911 he revised his own translation for the performance of *Hamlet* by the Bungei Kyōkai at the Imperial Theatre in Tokyo. This was the first faithful production of *Hamlet* in Japan. Needless to say, this production was very successful and marked an epoch in the history of the Japanese stage. Shōyō's intention was to give a Japanese interpretation to *Hamlet*,[4] but in 1913 the Bungei Kyōkai was disbanded and Shōyō retired from the theatre. Since then *Hamlet* was chiefly the object of study by scholars until the end of World War II.

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[4] *Ibid.*, p. 296.

While teaching at Waseda University Shōyō wrote dramas and novels. He was especially interested in *jōruri* and fiction written in the Edo period. At this point he was different from Shōichi Toyama who despised the Edo literature.

In 1885 Shōyō published *Shōsetsu Shinzui* ("The Essence of the Novel"), the first literary criticism in Japan, by which he tried to enhance the value of the Japanese novel as a work of art. By studying the English novel he wished to reform the Japanese novel which had been regarded with contempt by Confucianists before the Meiji period. This is why he is called "the father of Japanese modern novels."

Naoya Shiga (1883-1971), a novelist, saw *Hamlet* translated by Shōyō and staged by the Bungei Kyōkai. He was a leading novelist of the Shirakaba group that chiefly consisted of the graduates from Gakushūin University. The members of this literary circle were against naturalism which had been the main current in Japanese modern literature under the influence of Zolaism during the Meiji era. In their first edition of a literary magazine, *The Shirakaba*, in 1910, they claimed that they stood for idealism and humanitarian principles. After seeing *Hamlet* with Shunsho Doi in the leading role, Shiga said he disliked Hamlet's flippancy and rather liked Claudius's personality. Shiga read Shōyō's translation of *Hamlet*, but he could not find evidence of Claudius having killed his brother except in the Ghost's speech. This provided the starting-point for his *Kurōdiasu no Nikki* ("Claudius's Diary") in *The Shirakaba* in 1912.

Briefly, *Kurōdiasu no Nikki* is a kind of psychological novel. The author uses a form of diary to describe the inner life of Claudius who is caught in a dilemma between his love for Gertrude and his distrust of Hamlet. According to his diary, he has loved Gertrude, a good and weak woman, for three years, and he is not ashamed of his marriage to her after the death of his brother. He wishes to be a good husband to her and good father to Hamlet. He hopes that Hamlet will understand his passion because Hamlet is in love with Ophelia. But Hamlet doesn't understand him. Claudius begins to hate Hamlet.

Claudius suffers from Hamlet's misunderstanding because he never poisoned his brother. He writes in his diary, "When did I poison your father? Who saw it? . . . Did you hear it, know it, or imagine it? You are the shallowest dramatist in the world. You and other people will make me mad!"[5]

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[5] Naoya Shiga, "Kurodiasu no Nikki" ("Claudius's Diary"), *Shiga Naoya Zenshu* (Tokyo: Iwanami-shoten, 1973), II, 13.

Claudius imagines that the Ghost of his brother appears before him and this disturbs him greatly. One day he has a bad dream in which he and his brother go hunting and sleep side by side. He dreams that he strangles his brother to death and hears him groan. When he wakes up, he feels relieved to see his brother alive. However, he confesses in the diary that he is glad when he hears the news that his brother is dead. Perhaps the dream symbolizes Claudius's subconscious. Thus Shiga regarded Claudius as a man whose murderous intent existed at a subliminal level.

I am interested in the fact that Shiga intended to write *Hamuretto no Nikki* ("Hamlet's Diary") several years later, when he saw a movie in which Johnston Forbes-Robertson played the leading role. This time Shiga felt pity for Hamlet as a young man with a troubled heart. Unfortunately, Shiga could not complete this work, but his rough draft shows clearly his own design. In this diary Hamlet wonders whether he is Claudius's son, but he hates both Claudius and Gertrude. Moreover, he does not believe Ophelia who has the same womanhood as Gertrude. The story is too short for me to review it, but we know that Shiga intended to describe the characters from his own humanistic viewpoint.

Hideo Kobayashi (1902-1983), a literary critic and novelist, wrote *Oferia Ibun* ("Ophelia's Literary Remains") in 1931. When young, he was an ardent admirer of Naoya Shiga and Arthur Rimbaud. He quoted the words of Rimbaud, "Ma faim, Anne, / Fuis sur ton âne" in the beginning of this work. This is a beautiful but sad letter from Ophelia to Hamlet. The author describes poetically the inner life of Ophelia who is mad and wants to commit suicide. She writes:

> Hamlet, where are you now? I hear you have left for England. . . . Why am I so irritated? I am weeping, but I am not sad. Who cries for sadness? . . . Please don't say that I am writing strange things. Perhaps you don't know my feelings. . . . But I cannot help writing to you. If I stopped writing, I could not even die. . . . You said to me, "Go to the nunnery," but it's you who should die. . . . Ah, how futile this world is! . . . I have been dreaming. . . . This world is nothing but a dream. . . . To be, or not to be, that is the question. Ah, I remember your splendid words. You must solve the question, but it doesn't matter at all whether you solve it or not. . . . Life is full of complexities, but it ends so simply. . . . Now I feel lonely.[6]

Just before writing this, Kobayashi published *Xeno Tegami* ("A Letter to X") in which he confessed his own love affair with a mad woman.

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[6] Hideo Kobayashi, "Oferia Ibun" ("Ophelia's Literary Remains"), *Kobayashi Hideo Shu* (Tokyo: Chikuma-shobo, 1967), pp. 364-369.

Perhaps his sympathetic attitude toward Ophelia reflected his sad experience. These two works were not well accepted when published, but they are excellent examples of epistolary literature. I feel that he was a moralist rather than an artist, like Shiga whom he respected.

Osamu Dazai (1909-1948) was a romantic novelist but he became decadent and nihilistic after World War II and committed suicide together with his sweetheart. Still he is one of the most popular novelists among the young people in Japan. In 1941 he wrote his first long novel entitled *Shin Hamuretto* ("New Hamlet") in the form of a *Lesedrama.* In the preface he wrote, "My intention is neither to append nor to give a new interpretation to Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* I only play with writing. Borrowing the characters and the situations from the original, I will describe an unhappy home. This novel has no academic or political meanings. This is nothing but a psychological experiment."[7]

In this novel Hamlet is a nihilistic playboy, unreliable son, and jester. He is skillful at fencing, riding, and composing poetry, but he is not enthusiastic about anything. Gertrude is very old and Hamlet thinks her remarriage is ridiculous. Hamlet regards Claudius as a good and weak man, although he doesn't like him much. Claudius looks on Hamlet's whims as youthful follies and wants to be friendly with him.

Dazai wrote a few things that Shakespeare didn't write in his play. First, Hamlet gets Ophelia pregnant and she makes up her mind to bear and bring up her child alone in her villa. There is a very impressive conversation between Ophelia and Gertrude who sympathizes with her. Second, Polonius maligns Claudius with the rumour that he killed his brother. Claudius, however, admits that it is because of his want of natural virtue that such a rumour exists in Denmark. Third, Polonius plans a play, based on Christina Rossetti's poem, in which Polonius, Horatio, and Hamlet play the roles of bride, bridegroom, and ghost.

Gertrude is shocked at this play, but Claudius is not. Polonius explains that he had this play performed in order to seek justice. He saw Claudius murder his brother. Hearing this, Gertrude kills herself. Claudius gets angry and kills Polonius. In the end of the story, Claudius says, "Gertrude is too weak. I am not wrong. Look at me! I am living patiently in such a corrupt world. I'll never die! God will love a lonesome man like me. I must be stronger. I must forget love and vanity, and fight for the honour of Denmark. I am crying more bitterly at heart than you, Hamlet!" To this, Hamlet answers, "I cannot believe you. I will keep doubting you until I die."[8] The story ends with these words.

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[7] Osamu Dazai, "Shin Hamuretto" ("New Hamlet")' *Dazai Osamu Zenshu* (Tokyo: Chikuma-shobo, 1967), IV, 186-187.

In this story, neither Claudius nor Hamlet dies. However, we feel a kind of terror. Claudius appears to be a good man. but he actually murders his brother, has an illicit love affair, and starts a war to camouflage his predicament. Claudius is not such a conventional villain as seen in Elizabethan plays but a modern villain. I think this is Dazai's invention. Probably he was conscious of Japanese militarists while writing this novel. He wrote in another place, "It is such a man like Claudius who has tormented us until now."[9] It is noteworthy that Japanese militarists made a surprise attack on Pearl Harbour several months after he wrote this novel.

Dazai seemed to be interested in Shōyō's translation of *Hamlet*. He wrote in the preface, "Although I made fun of Shōyō's translation in a certain passage of my novel, I think that *Hamlet* should be translated in such an old-fashioned *kabuki* style as Shōyō did." He also said, "Reading *Hamlet*, I felt the great ability of a genius."[10] Thus Dazai knew very well of the greatness of Shakespeare and. after all, he recognized his own limitations when he completed his work. However, he had an intention to prove that Japanese novelists were more advanced in writing than the second or third-rate European novelists.[11] Shōyō often compared Shakespeare with Monzaemon Chikamatsu, a well-known *jōruri* writer,[12] but Dazai established a comparison between Shakespeare and himself.

During World War II, the Japanese novelists were under the control of the military authorities and they couldn't write freely. When the war ended in Japan's defeat, many novelists returned to their writing. They wrote for the Japanese public who were as hungry for literature as they were for food.

Some younger novelists were concerned about Shakespeare. For instance, Sei Itō (1905-1969) wrote a chapter on Shakespeare in his long novel *Narumi Senkichi* written from 1946 to 1948. He wrote this novel under the influence of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. In this story, Mr. Narumi, a literary critic and lecturer at the university, has a heated argument on *Coriolanus*, *Hamlet*, and *Henry IV* with his colleagues.[13] The discussion is clearly a kind of intellectual game, but it is interesting

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 321-322.

[9] *Ibid.*,p. 398.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 398.

[12] Shoyo Tsubouchi, "Chikamatsu tai Shakespeare tai Ibsen," *Shoyo Senshu*, ed. Shoyo Kyokai (Tokyo: Daiichi-shobo, 1977), X, 769-796.

[13] Sei Ito, "Narumi Senkichi," *Ito Sei Zenshu* (Tokyo: Shincho-sha, 1972), V, 41-65.

to me that Itō expressed his ideas on Japanese literature in terms of European literature. He had a profound knowledge of English literature. He translated D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* into Japanese, and he was brought to trial because his translation was considered obscene. However, his attitude toward literature was that writers should always look for fresh ideas Therefore he patterned his novels after those of European novelists.

Tsuneari Fukuda (1912-) is a critic, dramatist, and translator of Shakespeare. He rendered more than fifteen Shakespearean plays into Japanese and produced some of them on the stage. Like Shōyō, he always translated them while taking into consideration the translator's potential performance; therefore the language of his translations possessed the springiness that appealed to contemporary Japanese audiences. *Hamlet*, which he translated and produced in 1955, marked the beginning of an epoch in the history of post-war Japanese theatre. He also organized the dramatic troupes, the Kumo, the Keyaki, and the Subaru.

In 1949 Fukuda wrote *Horeishō Nikki* ("The Horatio Diary"). In his story he imagined that Horatio and Ophelia loved each other, First, Fukuda paid attention to Ophelia's song:

To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,
  All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window
  To be your Valentine.
Then up he rose, and donned his clo'es,
  And dupp'd the chamber door,
Let in the maid, that out a maid
  Never departed more.

(4.5.46-53)

Then he imagined that Ophelia sang this song for Horatio. According to his idea, Ophelia went mad because she loved both Hamlet and Horatio. Upon this supposition, Fukuda developed his story.

The hero of this novel is David Jones, a famous English director and actor of the Old Vic Company, producing *Hamlet* in London and playing the role of Horatio on the stage. Like Horatio he is a man of common sense and of noble character, but he is attracted by the charm of Isabel, a beautiful but wanton actress who is playing the part of Ophelia. One day he meets her on a night train where she tries to seduce him. He cannot respond to her temptation because he thinks of his wife, Instead, he makes love to Isabel in a dream. On the other hand, Albert, an actor portraying Hamlet, loves Isabel. David is consulted by Albert, his schoolmate at Oxford, about his love and Isabel's divorce. In this way, David, Isabel, and Albert consider their love problems while playing their respective roles of Horatio, Ophelia, and Hamlet on the stage.

One day, David makes up his mind to write a diary and lay bare his feelings, hoping that his wife will read it. Soon he makes a discovery about himself while writing. He thinks, "Do I love my wife? If anyone says my love for her is true, I will be relieved. . . . To exist is neither good nor bad. The only truth is that the years flow on. Until now I couldn't recognize the existence of myself. . . . I have not loved anyone sincerely. How can such a man justify his existence in this world?"[14] It is interesting that this is spoken by David, an English highbrow acting Horatio whose deeds are not so impressive in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

This is a love story and not a war novel. But it is noteworthy that the setting of this novel is laid in England during World War II. David tells Albert about the madness of war, and says, "We do nothing. We cannot do anything. . . . Now everybody loses confidence in these unusual circumstances. But I believe in the human intelligence, which has been cultivated through a long history and rewarded with good results. Twenty years had barely passed since the last war before we became involved in the present war. However, we need not scorn our foolishness nor despair of our humanity."[15] It seems to me that this was an opinion given by a Japanese intellectual who was in the dilemma of action and inaction in wartime. Perhaps Fukuda intended to express how much men of common sense in Japan suffered from the madness of the war while looking for their own *raison d'être*.

Shōhei Oōka (1909—), Fukuda's friend, became a writer while he was heavily influenced by Hideo Kobayashi, and wrote about his war experience in *Furyoki* ("A Record by a War Prisoner"). He also wrote a war novel entitled *Nobi* ("A Field Fire") in the form of a memorandum by a mad soldier of the defeated Japanese army wandering through Leyte in the Philippine Islands. This is a masterpiece in which Ooka delved into the problems of war and sin. He published *Hamuretto Nikki* ("The Hamlet Diary") in 1955, imagining that the mad soldier of *Nobi* wandered into the Danish court. The main motives were that he saw the film of *Hamlet* in which Laurence Olivier headed the cast and that he read John Dover Wilson's *What Happens in 'Hamlet'*. After coming home from Europe, he began to write *Hamuretto Nikki* under the idea that *Hamlet* was not a domestic tragedy but a political drama.[16] He explained in one of his essays that he received a hint from *The Idea of a Theatre* by Francis Fergusson.[17]

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[14] Tsuneari Fukuda, "*Horeisho Nikki*" (The Horatio Diary"), *Fukuda Tsuneari Shu* (Tokyo: Kawade-shobo, 1953), pp. 51-53.

[15] *Ibid*., pp. 15-16.

In Ooka's novel Hamlet is a Machiavellian prince desiring the throne for himself. He thinks it his duty to take revenge for his father's death, and he makes the soldiers believe in the appearance of the ghost because he wishes to gain the enthusiastic support of the soldiers who miss his dead father. Horatio seems to be a Machiavellian, too. He is an Italian and becomes a conversational partner of Hamlet after the fall of Florence. In addition, Gertrude is politically motivated when she agrees to marry Claudius on condition that Hamlet be made the princely heir of Denmark in future. At first Hamlet consents to her marriage because he thinks that it is the best way for both her and his safety, but he becomes disappointed at her lust and obscenity, and he makes up his mind to take his revenge on Claudius and Gertrude.

Claudius is very afraid of Fortinbras's betrayal, and he makes military preparations to fight Fortinbras. He orders Polonius to collect blacksmiths to build guns, and sends Laertes to France to buy rifles. On the other hand, Fortinbras is a keen politician. When he is camping on a cape, he happens to meet Hamlet who is being escorted by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to England. Hamlet tells Fortinbras about his banishment and asks for help. As a token of his thanks Hamlet proposes that he will give him a part of Danish territory, but Fortinbras refuses his offer. He says, "I have never complained that my uncle succeeded to the Norwegian crown. . . . I am not as bent on revenge as you. My aspirations are greater than yours."[18]

After Hamlet's death Fortinbras becomes the ruler of Denmark and contrives to invade Poland and Russia with the guns which Claudius collected. Dying, Hamlet says to Horatio, "I wrote the truth in this diary," and hands his diary to him. Horatio sends it to his friend in Paris with a letter in which he writes, "This is the diary of my former master who died tragically. . . . It is dangerous for me to keep it because Fortinbras forbids us from telling the truth. . . . I am now an instructor at Wittenberg University, and I never want to be a prince's adviser and companion again. . . . I know from Hamlet's life of the danger that befalls a man in the position of princely heir who becomes truly insane while feigning madness. . . . How many people died to no purpose!" While writing the letter Horatio remembers that Hamlet said to him, "I am mad. Not Hamlet but Hamlet's madness did this."[19]

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[16] Shohei Ooka, "Bibliography," *Ooka Shohei Zenshu* (Tokyo: Chuokoron-sha, 1974), IV, 420.

[17] Ooka, "Gendai Shosetsu Sakuho" ("How to Write Modern Novels"), *Ibid.*, XII, 197-202.

[18] Ooka "Hamuretto Nikki" ("The Hamlet Diary"), *Ibid.*, IV, 48-49.

Probably Ooka wished to express in this novel that modern society is full of madness, wars, and political machination. For this purpose he changed Hamlet into a Machiavellian. He also treated the ghost as a symbol of potential ambition or dream. Hamlet says, "Fortinbras mocks my illusion. But who can say Poland is not his illusion? Everybody has his own. Therefore, to live with one is important."[20] These words reflect Ooka's attitude toward life.

I have written about the several Japanese novels based on the characters from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. It is noteworthy that these novels reflect the influence *Hamlet* had on the novelists who read the translations and saw the stage and film adaptations. Indeed, each work is a reflection of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* mirrored through the Japanese language and culture. The Japanese novelists gave their own interpretations to the play and incorporated their interpretations into their own works. Having read their "Hamlets," I noticed that they shared common characteristics.

First, they attempted to write what Shakespeare didn't write in his drama. Generally speaking, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is full of ambiguities which must have aroused their appetite for writing. In addition they sought to fill in the gaps between drama and novel. Some of them, for example, adopted the diary form in writing their novels because it was convenient for them to express the hero's inner monologue, or the delicate shades of the hero's psychology. Others tried to unveil the mysterious personality of Hamlet by focussing on such secondary characters as Claudius, Ophelia, Horatio, and Fortinbras. They built the characters from their unique imaginations.

Second, the Japanese novelists discovered modern agony in Hamlet's affliction, and expressed it through their literature. For instance, the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy was a problem not only for translators but also for novelists. It provided them with a literary stimulus and exerted a deep influence on the Japanese modern view of life.

Since the Meiji era the Japanese intellectuals have been attracted by Hamlet's introspection, and they have thought about how they should live. Occupied though they were with themes that concerned the times in which they lived, they nevertheless found in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* issues that they could adapt to their own needs and purposes.

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[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 66-88.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

In this way Shakespeare's *Hamlet* had a strong impact on the Japanese novelists and provided them with the impetus to revive *Hamlet* in contemporary literature. As a matter of course they needed to fill in the social and cultural gaps between Elizabethan England and present-day Japan. As a result they succeeded in stimulating and enriching the imagination, and contributing to the development of Japanese modern literature. While reading their novels, I could not help but sense the deep influence of *Hamlet* on the intellectual and literary development in Japan. At the same time I renewed my appreciation of the greatness of Shakespeare as a universal dramatist.

NOTES

"My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth"-"The readiness is all . . . . Let be": Hamlet at the Crossroads

DANIEL MEYER-DINKGRAFE

The Ghost of Hamlet's father gives Hamlet the order to revenge his murder by Claudius. At onee it is obvious for Hamlet that he cannot continue his life in the way he has led it so far:

> Yea, from the table of my memory
> I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
> All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past
> That youth and observation copied there.[1]

Only the Ghost's command shall have a place in his thoughts (1.5.102-3). In order to be able to plan and carry out his revenge Hamlet assumes an "antic disposition." Nevertheless, he has difficulties in carrying out his revenge. Rose expresses Hamlet's problem thus: "His problem is one of form and content, of suiting the action to the word, the word to the action—that is of finding a satisfactory shape for his revenge."[2]

This paper will show that in *Hamlet* there are two different shapes of revenge that constitute the inner development of the title character. It is very important in our context that it is the Ghost who triggers off Hamlet's involvement with revenge. In the Ghost's passages we find a remarkable sequence of three words that recur:

> . . . List, list, O list! (1.5.22)
> But this most foul, strange and unnatural. (1.5.28)
> Of life, of crown, of queen at once dispatch'd, (1.5.75)
> Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd, (1.5.77)
> O horrible! O horrible! most horrible! (1.5.80)
> Adieu, adieu, adieu. Remember me. (1.5.91)

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[1] *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), 1.5.98-101. All further references are to this edition and will be incorporated in the text.

[2] Mark Rose, "Hamlet and the Shape of Revenge," *Euglish Literary Renaissance* 1 (1971), 138.

Those three-word sequences occur six times altogether. It is the number 6 that leads to a parallel of the Ghost's position in the play as trigger for Hamlet's subsequent actions on the one hand, and card number 6 in the Tarot as described by Elisabeth Haich.[3] The card, called "Scheideweg," depicts a character, the Magician, whose development of consciousness is delineated throughout the 22 cards of the major Arcana of the Tarot.[4] On this particular card the Magician has got the choice between two opposite ways of life, symbolized by two female characters on the card. The decision, according to Haich, is whether or not to give up one's true inner belief for earthly profit.[5] Hamlet is at the crossroads after the Ghost has given him the order of revenge. He even has to choose twice, and both times the choice is an unconscious one. Like the Magician on Tarot-card 6 he is lured by two opposing forces: On the one hand there is the Ghost of Hamlet's father. He can be interpreted as parallel to one of the female characters on Tarot-card 6, called "Himmelskönigin," who is queen of the three aspects of life (birth, life and death), of space, and of the three dimensions.[6] Both "Himmelskönigin" and the Ghost of Hamlet's father represent good, even heavenly qualities; the number three is striking in those six sequences of three parts each in the Ghost's words. It reminds us of the symbolical meaning of the number 3 as divine Trinity, and so does the same number 3 when it refers to the qualities of the "Himmelskönigin" as mentioned above. On the other hand, Hamlet is lured by the opposite, the evil side, represented in the play by Claudius. He can be interpreted as parallel to the other luring female character on Tarot-card 6, who is described by Haich as full of cunning and selfish calculation, without any true spirituality or belief in God, showing friendliness and affection in order to delude her victims.[7] Claudius flatters Hamlet even before the Ghost appears: "My cousin Hamlet and my son" (1.2.64), and especially in the lines:

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[3] Elisabeth Haich, *Die Zweiundzwanzig Bewubtseinsstufen des Menschen* (Munchen: Engelberg/Schweiz, 1971). The paper does not intend to present the Tarot as a possible source for Shakespeare!

[4] According to Haich, complete images of different men can be composed and shown by those prehistoric presentations known as the Tarot-cards. The pack consists of 78 cards, 56 of them are called Minor Arcana, 22 of them Major Arcana. The cards of the Major Arcana represent consciousness as the principle governing man's characteristics as depicted in the Minor Arcana. It depends upon the level of consciousness whether man will use his gifts and abilities to his own good and to the benefit of his environment or not. (Cf. Haich, op. cit., 11-24).

[5] Haich (n. 3 above), p. 63.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

> You are the most immediate to our throne,
> And with no less nobility of love
> Than that which dearest father bears his son
> Do I impart toward you . . .
>
> (1.2.109-12)

Faced with this first possibility of choice, Hamlet decides in favour of the Ghost and thus in favour of revenge. He dismisses Claudius's offer of the easy, comfortable way; and he is aware of the consequences:

> The time is out of joint. O cursed spite,
> That ever I was born to set it right.
>
> (1.5.196-7)

In this decision Hamlet follows his inner conviction. The second decision Hamlet has to make—also unconsciously—is the manner in which to carry out his revenge. It is important that, according to Haich, the Magician on Tarot-card 6 can and will only choose the correct way; for which ever way he may choose, he will eventually arrive at his goal: he will find God. It is only a question of time, because the erroneous (wrong) way takes longer than the correct, direct one.[8] Let us see whether that also applies to Hamlet. In his choice of the shape of revenge Hamlet first chooses the kind of revenge that places him in the literary tradition of Senecan revenge tragedy: he encourages himself by bloodthirsty and hyperbolical ranting:[9]

> O most pernicious woman!
> O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!
> My tables. Meet it is I set it down
> That one may smile and smile and be a villain—
>
> (1.5.105-8)

The cliché of the revenger is presented to Hamlet in two ways: first by the First Player's speech which is being delivered at Hamlet's own request. The revenger, Pyrrhus, becomes a reflection of Hamlet's assumed role as revenger,[10] for Hecuba's tears lead the reader or spectator to sympathize with the victim, not the revenger. Pyrrhus, "roasted in wrath and fire" (2.2.457) is characterized as "hellish." Hamlet has to acknowledge, intellectually, that he has failed as a revenger—ranting as repeated in the second soliloquy (2.2.574-7) does not yield any results. Although that insight leads to action—the "play within the Play"—Hamlet has still a long way to go before he abstains from ranting altogether: intellectual insight is not enough.

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[8] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

[9] Cf. Rose (n. 2 above), p. 137.

The cliché of the revenger is presented to Hamlet not only via the First Player's speech, but also in Laertes. Laertes occupies the classical role of revenger when confronted with his father's death. He is furious and Rose calls his thirst for revenge "ranting in the best manner of English Seneca."[11]

> To hell allegiance! Vows to the blackest devil!
> Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
> I dare damnation. To this point I stand,
> That both the worlds I give to negligence,
> Let come what comes, only I'll be reveng'd
> Most thoroughly for my father.
>
> (4.5.131-6)

In terms of the Tarot, Hamlet's choice of the classical role of revenger can be interpreted as the erroneous path. He does not get anywhere (nor does Laertes, for that matter). Hamlet is unhappy, his spiritual destruction and inner chaos, all experiences characteristic of the erroneous way, are obvious especially from Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" soliloquy (3.1.56-88), where he contemplates suicide. In the play, the erroneous way is moreover characterized by Hamlet's inability to obey the Ghost's warning "Taint not thy mind" (1.5.85) in which the Ghost, as it were, refers to Hamlet's own observation on the "stamp of one defect" (1.4.31), namely, his being "passion's slave" (3.4.72).

Hamlet's final failure in his attempt to be what we called a "classical revenger" is his rash and "tainted" murder of Polonius. The shock of it for Hamlet, together with the second appearing of the Ghost, bring about the turn in Hamlet's development: they enable him to take the correct shape of revenge in which he obeys the Ghost's warning "Taint not thy mind." The change expresses itself in Hamlet's behaviour throughout Act 5. At the beginning of this act Hamlet contemplates death; he is still involved with his task of revenge, for in his third passage he mentions Cain, the first fratricide (5.1.76) He also contemplates his own death: his reference to Alexander and Caesar are more than a reflection that famous men have to die. Hamlet, as opposed to Caesar, does not lament his lack of Alexander's heroism. In laughing at Alexander's fall, Hamlet shows his own growing maturity and knowledge of himself.[12] Hamlet's attitude towards death can now be characterized as of a gentle serenity.[13] In general, Hamlet has now accepted divine providence as a guiding principle of life: he interprets his quick decision to take the letter from Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to read and exchange it, as a sign from above:

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[10] *Ibid.*,

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 140.

> . . . and that should learn us
> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will.
>
> (5.2.9-11)

Belief in divine providence is further sustained in the line "Why even in that was heaven ordinant" (5.2.48), and especially in Hamlet's last words to Horatio before his duel with Laertes:

> Not a whit. We defy augury. There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all. Since no man, of aught he leaves, knows aught, what is't to leave betimes? Let be.
>
> (5.2.215-20)

Hamlet now follows the Ghost's "Taint not thy mind." He does not loathe the world he has to live in any longer. His outburst against Laertes is relatively short, he is sorry about it later (5.2.75-78), and his words regarding Claudius are far less emotional than, for instance, "A rat! . . . Is it the King?" (3.4.23-6):

> Does it not think thee, stand me now upon—
> He that hath kill'd my king and whor'd my mother,

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[12] See Gerard Reedy, "Alexander died: *Hamlet* V. i. 216-240," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 24 (1973), 133.

[13] Cf. Sister Miriam Joseph, "*Hamlet*, a Christian Tragedy," *Studies in Philology* 39 (1962), 135.

Popp'd in between th' election and my hopes,
Thrown out his angle for my proper life
And with such coz' nage—is't not prefect conscience
To quit him with this arm? And is't not to be damn'd
To let this canker of our nature come
In further evil?

(5.2.63-70)

In the final catastrophe Hamlet both stabs Claudius with the poisoned rapier and forces him to drink the poisoned wine that had just killed his mother. Thus, Claudius dies of poison as revenge for both his poisoning of Hamlet's father and of Gertrude. In his own death, Hamlet atones for the innocent deaths he caused. He dies as a true minister of God, and he is His scourge no longer. In the terms of the Tarot, he has reached both his earthly goal, revenge, and his spiritual goal, God.

Approaching
"The Night Before Christmas":
The Advent of *Hamlet* as 'Source'

R.F. FLEISSNER

The problem is: Did America's most popular poem owe a debt to *Hamlet*? During what season does that universal thriller *Hamlet* take place? According to the first *Variorum* gloss on act I, scene 1, lines 158-64, Shakespeare "intimates to us in the clearest manner the time of the year in which [he] wishes us to conceive the opening of this tragedy—namely, in winter, but a little before Advent. . . ."[1] Yet if winter is thought of in customary terms as starting with the solstice, this statement is contradictory. Even that would really not be so strange, of course, since evidence elsewhere in the play on this score also seems contradictory. It has likewise been argued, for instance, that Ophelia's flowers indicate the presence of summer, not winter, and, as *Variorum* editor H.H. Furness added, "The reference to 'the *dew* of yon high eastern hill' " (following hard upon "the season . . . / Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated") also hardly suggests frosty wintertime. It might even be remarked further that Rosencrantz's reference to "Lenton" entertainment (2.2.306), so spelled, with a capital in early Folios and Quartos, could literally signify the time of Lent, not Advent (as well as having its derived meaning of "sparing," of course), yet no one seems to have pondered this fact. Perhaps time has passed rapidly.

My point in this essay is, however, not to reconcile such differences, but rather to suggest that other authors who have borrowed from the play have related the time to the Christmas season. First, the description of Advent at the tragedy's outset has lent itself to accommodation in a number of different ways, as is well enough known (such as being quoted in greeting cards and the like). Secondly, it is common knowledge that Charles Dickens drew upon the opening scenes in his novella "A Christmas Carol," especially in the depiction of the ghostly visitation of Marley, who reflects the *Hamlet* Ghost as a purgatorial disembodied soul. Dickens, although no Roman Catholic himself (he was appalled at the poverty in some Catholic countries), did not avoid using the purgatorial vision.[2] Since the pagan folk tradition likewise allowed for telling ghost stories during Yuletide, such a view is understandable (and, indeed, the revenant in the Danish tragedy appears to reflect both Christian and pagan influences).

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[1] *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: Hamlet*. ed. H.H. Furness, 2 Vols. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1877), I, 24 (The citation is from Max Moltke's edition, 1839).

The Dickensian debt seems quite well known, but what is not, perhaps, is the Hamletian influence on the most popular of Christmas poems, Clement C. Moore's "The Night Before Christmas." At first blush, of course, the possible connection between "Not a mouse stirring" (1.1.10) and "Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse" may appear laughably absurd or coincidental, and, not to be out of line with commonsense, I should agree. After all, what bonafide aesthetic relation can exist between a revenge tragedy (if *Hamlet* truly be that) and a children's Christmas doggerel poem? Not too much, but lines from *Hamlet* do have their mouse-like way of sneaking into some of the oddest of literary nooks and crannies. My purpose is not to dwell on a superficial association as such, however, but rather to indicate that *if* a debt to present, it also represents yet another way in which the Advent season has been reappropriated. Hence the word *Advent* in my title has multiple meaning.

Let us see how such adaptation works. Just before Francisco's mouse image, he tells of the weather being "bitter cold" (1.1.7). Could his full phrase " '*tis* bitter cold" have suggested the doggerel poem's opening contracted line, setting the scene for a fairy-tale Christmastide: " '*Twas* the night before Christmas"? Perhaps so. Why not? Certainly bitter cold relates more to winter than to any other season—regardless of the commonplace that "even in the nights of *early summer* in the north of Europe, during the short interval between twilight and sunrise, 'the air bites shrewdly' " (1.4.1).[3] In any case, both play and poem are initially set during nighttime for magical purposes.

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[2] Whereas the *Hamlet* Ghost says that it is "Doom'd for a certaine terme to walke the night," being "purg'd," and "forbid / To tell the secrets of [its] Prison-House," Marley says; "Nor can I tell you what I would. A very little more is permitted to me; I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere." Shakespearian citations are from *The First Folio of Shakespeare*, prepared by Charlton Hinman (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), with line references to the Pelican ed. For further comment, see my *Dickens and Shakespeare: A Study in Histrionic Contrasts* (New York: Haskell House, 1965), p. 2. Jane Vogel, in *Allegory in Dickens* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1977), likewise remarks that "in bringing on the Ghosts in *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens tips his hat to Shakespeare" (p. 188). Dickensian references are to the Penguin edition.

[3] *New Variorum*, I, 24. (The citation is from the nineteenth-century Shakespearian Charles Knight). Except for the italics in this quotation, other italics in quoted matter are added in this paper.

The key piece of textual evidence which clinches the curious affinity between the non-stirring mice in the two works, I would submit, is that later Marcellus uses the word "stir" in connection with "spirit" (1.1.161) in a specifically Christmas context, the meaning again being that during a silent night, especially a holy one, not a rodent (or even spirit) dares make a commotion. Might not the author of "The Night Before Christmas" have aptly transformed this idea by indulging in thoughts about another, allied spirit (the Christmas spirit initially, let us say) even as his mentor, Dickens, created his own "holy ghosts"[4] of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come? It would seem that way.

If so, then we could seriously consider the transformation further: The Hamlet Ghost becomes metamorphosed, as it were, into the Santa Claus of the poem, both beings having their "mythic" stature.[5] Again, such a reading might support the popularity of the view that the source of the inspiration, the revenant in the tragedy, is basically benign (or at least may have had that effect on the author of the poem). Another point not to be bypassed is that the Prince refers to the King's keeping "wassail" (1.4.9), a term frequently germane to Christmas talk (as in the carol "The Wassail Song"). True, the context indicates no more than "Festivity, a drinking-bout,"[6] and the implications of wassail for the play are indeed more sinister than convivial alone (Hamlet speaks of the defect of drinking too much, for instance, and an envenomed goblet emerges elsewhere in the tragedy, notably during the fencing bout), but that may also be all the more reason why the poet later would have wished to *transform* the setting.[7] Hamlet does use the ejaculation (not curse) "by Saint Patrick" (1.5.136), and Moore the transformer might well enough have been induced to shift, in his "mind's eye," to revert to Hamlet's phrase (1.2.185), the names of saints, thus coming whimsically up with the Saint Nicholas of the poem. Yet it might be going also rather far to infer that the latter's reindeer were at all, say, poetically inspired by the tradition of Shakespeare's having plausibly been a deer poacher! (For what it is worth, on the other hand, Hamlet *does* cite "deer" and "hart" in 3.2.259-60).

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[4] This pleasant turn of phrase derives from Jane Vogel's keynote opening address, "Dickens' Aladdin's Lamp: the Genie of Christianity" at "Success Through Style: A Conference on Children's / Young Adult Literature" (Central State University, 1984), which I directed. (The conference focussed mainly on the writings of Virginia Hamilton and Norma Klein, who were present in a symposium, and June Berkley's critique of censorship, "Whose Right to Choose?" But Prof. Vogel set the scene for Easter Week with her opener).

[5] Thus, mythic sense, at least from a Jungian perspective, duly supersedes commonsense here. It appears probable that Moore would have transformed the Ghost into a Santa because he was already well aware of Dickens's own previous adaptation of the spectral idea in his three Christmas spirits. It might, however, be noted that, theologically, a ghost or disembodied soul differs in kind from a good or evil spirit. On the question of whether the *Hamlet* Ghost, if considered an evil spirit masquerading as the genuine departed soul of Hamlet's father, might have a subversive effect upon children and other children's literature, cf. Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization* (New York: Wildman Press, 1983), passim, especially Chap. III: "Who's Afraid of the Brothers Grimm?" In Germany, the popularity of the Grimms was second only to the Bible's. (Both Ghost and St. Nicholas, Father Xmas in England, are father figures).

[6] *New Variorum*, I, 78. The gloss is Furness's.

In any event, it is the mouse and not the deer which has the dominant animal reverberation in the play and bearing thereby on the poem. Recently, for what it is worth, a short article made fun of the curious fact that the tragedy contains definitely meaningful, if minor, mouse imagery, terming such a view a "misreading of *Hamlet*,"[8] however. Reference was also made, *en passant*, to "The Night Before Christmas," albeit without serious purport. When I first read this amusing piece, I wrote the editor that mouse imagery may indeed have had some effect—not in the play as such, to be sure, but in its influence upon Agatha Christie's own theaterpiece *The Mousetrap* (surely comparable to *Hamlet* in terms of the suggestion of madness and in its own popularity, because it is the longest running play in theater history). Since this very same title was first given to the play-within-the-play by Prince Hamlet, since both works are "detective stories" in their own right, and since both involve the possible insanity of a leading figure or two (among other matters), clearly, Christie's work can be said to contain a few "echoes" of the tragedy, although the most ostensible, conscious literary throwback is certainly to Mother Goose ("Three Blind Mice" being sung for effect during suspenseful moments. Compare also her mystery *Murder Most Foul* whose title is of course based on the play: 1.5.27). Thus *Hamlet* worked its way into two different types of children's works (or at least works involving children's literary themes). The real point is that mouse imagery had truly a purpose in Christie's work and so its relation to *Hamlet's* own rodential allusions is not merely coincidental (if hardly quite earth-shaking either). (In any case, the point takes

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[7] See my discussion of Hamlet's critique of drinking, "That 'Dram of Eale' Again: Textplay in *Hamlet*," *American Notes and Queries*, 21 (March/April, 1983), 98-99.

[8] Mathew Winston, "Misreading *Hamlet*," *Hamlet Studies*, 3 (Summer, 1981), 53-54 (abstracted in the *Shakespeare Newsletter* at length).

RATiocination).

Now does *Hamlet* have references to children who might also anticipate those of "The Night Before Christmas"? Yes, surely we think immediately of the "aerie of children" (2.2.327), an allusion to child actors. As was reported in the Renaissance pamphlet *The Children of the Chapel Stript and Whipt:* "Even in her maiesties chapel do these pretty upstart youthes profane the Lordes day by the lasciuious writhing of their tender limbes, and the gorgeous decking of their apparell, in feigning bawdie fables gathered from the idolatrous heathen poets. . . ."[9] Hamlet duly inquires about these children (2.2.332-37). True, no "visions of sugarplums" are dancing in *their* heads, as in fact in the poem, but an interest in the talents of childhood is perforce likewise present. The play, moreover, appeals to children.

Games children play (as well as some adults) also find their place in the tragedy as if pointing ahead to Clement C. Moore's famous *chef d'oeuvre.* The Prince cites "the hobby-horse" (3.2.127), which was used in country May-games. He also playfully mentions "the posy of a ring" (3.2.142), which suggests an old tradition in costuming. "The Mouse-trap" itself (3.2.227) is a kind of game this Prince is wont to play. The little hit-or-miss word-game he plays with Polonius (3.2.360-70) dealing with the camel and the weasel and so forth is another instance of the same sort of sport. If the Freudian view be given some due credence, the Prince may even playfully earn the title of "mama's boy" (but never to the extent that Coriolanus does). At the same time he looks askance at Claudius's own "gaming" (3.3.91), namely, the vice of gambling. Thus, allusions to games in the play support the verdict that it was a work which naturally could thereby inspire children's literature, which also involves the ludic spirit.

One difficulty with the early Christmas reference of Marcellus is that it seems to contradict the folklegendry allowing for ghosts to be subjects for storytelling during *Modra Nect* (the "Night of the Mothers") or the original pagan times as correlated with the Christian celebration. Of course, the very fact that he brings the subject up bespeaks the correlation in a way, but perhaps his *denial* that specters dare "stir abroad" (1.1.161) during this holy season is to be taken *cum grano salis*, an effect merely to whet the spectator's appetite, since King Hamlet's Ghost *does* appear during this chilly time. Marcellus indeed does qualify his remarks with "Some say" too—as if he means that *others* may say it differently. At any rate, the Ghost duly disappears at cock-crow (as in many similar supernatural stories, for example that behind Saint-Saëns' familiar program music, "Danse Macabre"). Such leave-taking may suggest an evil spirit perhaps more than a genuine disembodied soul, especially because these pagan overtones are reiterated later in the Prince's line "The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit" (5.2.340). Certainly the *Variorum* correctly glosses this line as referring to a victorious cock crowing over his defeated antagonist,[10] but since Shakespeare's allusions are so often rich in meaning, what is to prevent the spectator recalling the earlier cock reference? Not every cock crows, to be sure, and Ophelia's own exclamation citing the rooster is notably bawdy (5.4.59). So the point can be disputed.

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[9] *New Variorum*, I, 165.

Would then "The Night Before Christmas" *truly* reflect (or refract) *Hamlet*—except, at best, in a parodic manner? Yes.[11] In answer, we should bear in mind that the Prince involves himself enough in parody too, so parody itself *could* have been one basis for the debt. In any case, at the finale of the play Horatio prays that "flights of angels sing thee to thy rest" (5.2.454), and since such hosts are more often thought of, and sung about, during Advent than at any other time (unless it be between Christmas and Epiphany), because of the heralding of Christ's birth, this cherubic allusion may constitute the last (oblique) one to the Christmas season in the play. On the whole, nevertheless, I should conclude by saying that "the Advent of Hamlet," as cited in my punning title, alludes more to the transformation of seasonal nuances by later creative writers less concerned with reading the tragedy in its own context than with relating its renowned popularity to the most familiar of Christian holidays for their own purposes. After all, "pilfering" from *Hamlet* often enough makes for another sure-fire success. This fire need not be gutted.

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[10] *New Variorum*, I, 453. (The citations is from the eighteenth-century edition by Jennens).

[11] Such a claim is vital in helping to authenticate the poem as in fact Moore's rather than Major Henry Livingston's, the work having been first published anonymously. Moore's other poetry, if unlike this verse (originally called "A Visit from St. Nicholas"), was very serious. He was a professor of languages of the past at a distinguished seminary, We recall how *Hamlet* too involves religious themes of import. For a run-down of the debate, see Donald Hall, "Dancer, Dasher, Prancer and Vixen: Whose Reindeer Are They?" *New York Times Book Review*, 23 December 1984, p. 18. I am inclined to add that Moore intended the passing references to *Hamlet* as a private, scholarly jest.

"From Whose Bourn"?

R. F. FLEISSNER

It has been brought to my attention that the "bourn" Hamlet cites may not mean *boundary* (the usual reading, of course), but *stream*, whereby one of the rivers of Hades would revert to mind, most commonly the Styx.[1] This viewpoint lends itself to the currently fashionable suggestion that the ghost is pagan or devilish. But is such a verdict *too* modern? It also indirectly might hint, concomitantly, at the conception of purgatory as ultimately derivative of (or having been once accommodated to) the classical idea of Hades; because of the relatively late origin of the Catholic doctrine (long after Christianity had got formally settled), such a correlation appears at least plausible. Whether such a reading confuses the spectral image even more, however, is a problem. Let us confront it.

After due consideration, in any case, this "new" reading of *bourn* represents a canard. The fact is that, according to the *OED*, Shakespeare used the designation seven times in his works, and each instance had the simple significance of limit or boundary. (But then a stream presumably could also serve as such a dividing line). The noun was sometimes confused with the meaning of *stream*, but mainly in terms of variant spelling; moreover, because five rivers in all were traditionally linked with the netherworld, another being the Acheron (to which he explicitly referred elsewhere), the use of *bourn* in the singular could be rather misleading. In spite of the apparent currency of the word for stream, as exemplified, for example, in the name of the county of *Bourne*mouth (at the mouth of the English channel), it appears unlikely that he wanted a connotation of the aquatic significance; it is too easy to read in meanings after the fact, to infer that just because Dante had pondered stationary souls in his *Inferno* (from which, then, incidentally, T.S. Eliot later derived his well-known headnote for *Prufrock*), the pensive Prince too had in mind that a lost soul *ipso facto* could not make a return trip to harass the living. On the other hand, such a view contains actually the seeds of the purgatorial one insofar as shades in Hades lent themselves to the folklorish belief that disembodied spirits could escape from the grave, a view at times tolerated, if not openly avowed, by Catholicism. Still, the idea is not cited in this connection in the *Variorum*.

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[1] 3.1.79. References to *Hamlet* are to the Pelican edition, gen. ed. Alfred Harbage, with quotations checked with the Norton facsimile of the First Folio, where the spelling is *Borne*. Professor Paul W. Miller, of Wittenberg University (Ohio), raised this point in reaction to my critical analysis, "Lo, Where It Comes Again," *Hamlet Studies*, 5 (Summer / Winter, 1983), 111-13. (I cite him with his kind permission.) Another scholar, whose name must remain undisclosed, has suggested to me that the whole description of the ghost could stem from Seneca's *Thyestes*, with reference therein to the Phlegethon river.

A further point worth mentioning is that the seemingly brazen contradiction in Hamlet's notorious admission about the "undiscovered Countrey" from which "No traveller returnes" is not privy merely to recalcitrant theater critics or, say, perverse scholarly minds: It is duly mentioned, for example, in Anthony Burgess's well-known study, *Shakespeare*.[2] As a prominent, English Catholic commentator on Shakespeare (given the honor of delivering a key address at the Shakespeare Congress in Washington, having written several serious books on him, along with fictive ones, the most recent example of the latter being *Enderby's Dark Lady)*, Burgess cannot be totally disregarded, albeit admittedly he is more of a creative popularizer than a strict historian. As for the general issue of contradictions, may I elaborate a bit on the opening sentence in my original note in your pages by underscoring that what I meant, of course, was that such discrepancies in metaphysical meaning as I pointed out are on the level of appearance but not necessarily (full-fledged) reality? At the risk of ushering in such a time-worn clinché, which has sometimes been applied to the dramatist as a be-all-and-end-all, I would yet add that what Hamlet says about mere *seeming*, as distinct from *being* (1.2.76), is clearly germane thematically. "What appears to be" can be superficial, and as such it ought not to be venerated simply by itself as appealing to the external senses and hence impressionistically justifiable. In short, the Bible, as the Word of God, could not, in faith, be replete with contradictions, even as the Almighty, by definition, is free from such error (The Principle of Non-Contradiction or Identity); it can only *seem* that way. It does not help much to aver that the Scriptures or Shakespeare ought not to be read always literally, for if, by *literally*, we refer to what the writer (or Inspirer) intended by the words, that approach surely is the only way historically to read these works. Hence biblical exegetes have urged for some time that a given scriptural passage can have one, and only one, literal meaning, whether that meaning be considered metaphoric or straightforward. And why should not the same be true of Shakespeare? The scholar's onus, therefore, is to scout out the seeming contrary readings, understand what was probably meant behind the words, and thus make the play itself more enjoyable for the devotee who may otherwise be beset by different, difficult passages which appear to belie each other. The seeming paradox in this context is that Hamlet's logical thought processes are not in tune with external reality, at least the pneumatological kind prompted in the first scenes. Are we not reminded *en passant* of what T.S. Eliot labeled the "dissociation of sensibility," a pattern which set in about the general time of *Hamlet* and from which we have never completely recovered?

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[2] Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972, p. 197.

Now the problem of the genesis of the ghost may best be coped with in terms of the genesis, in turn, of Shakespeare's description, say, as plausibly derived from Thomas More's *Supplication of Souls*—a point recently advocated.[3] (Because scholars have debated Shakespeare's hand in the play *Sir Thomas More* and because More's indictment of Richard III is echoed in the Shakespearean version, an affiliation with More is tenable.) In contradistinction, one of more haunting views on the purgatorial issues is that the revenant, in somehow being allowed to take temporary leave from his intermediate confines, is unaware that in demanding vengeance he is violating the rules on high. This anomaly, which might be classified "The Case of the Delinquent Spirit," was set forth disarmingly by the late Alfred Harbage, as I have noted previously, but is currently still upheld by Kenneth Muir, who has seen fit to disclose that "it is not certain that Shakespeare was aware of" the doctrine "that ghosts from purgatory would be full of joy and tranquility and would not be vindictive."[4] Muir has added, as a qualification, that *if* the dramatist had been aware of such dogma, he need not have wanted to "conform to it in writing a play"; however, if Shakespeare did think about it deeply, as it is to be hoped, he would have clearly recognized that a state preparatory for heaven would, along the lines of simple verisimilitude, not permit sin to creep in, and he would have duly expected brighter members of his audience, at least, to make allowance for that truism too. Professor Muir *is* to be credited for his common sense approach in general, but the usual brand does not apply so easily to the spirit world. It is apter to believe that King Hamlet accommodated the term *revenge* in the technical purgatorial sense of *purge* or *purify*, as the tracts indicated, but a gloss overlooked then by the student prince. Such a specialized behest would hardly gibe much with the ghost's side instruction that Hamlet *not* harm his mother, but need apparitions be psychologically consistent?[5] The second appearance of the specter to Hamlet, after all, may be a projection only, as some psychological critics have submitted—for what that additional obfuscation may be worth at this sensitive juncture.

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[3] Victorio Gabrieli, "*Hamlet* and *The Supplication of Souls*," *Notes and Queries*, NS 26 (1979), 120-21. For my follow-up, see "*Hamlet* and *The Supplication of Souls* Reconvened," ibid., 32 (1985), 49-51. In endorsing Gabrieli's view, at least for the time being until better evidence is forthcoming, I see it as more in keeping with Fr. Devlin's but not Sister Miriam Joseph's view, as discussed in my survey in the inaugural issue of this journal.

[4] *Shakespeare's Tragic Sequence* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1979), p. 60.

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[5] The two instructions do gibe in the sense that, in both cases, the ghost would not be advocating bodily harm.

Kite Flying, Again

J.J.M. TOBIN

There is still a lack of scholarly unanimity in the matter of "pajock," the usual reading for the final word in Hamlet's triumphant doggerel verse which he recites to Horatio upon the king's hasty departure from the play-within-the-play:

> For thou dost know, O Damon dear,
> This realm dismantled was
> Of Jove himself, and now reigns here
> A very, very—pajock.
>
> (3.2.275-278)[1]

I wish to revive again the possibility that the correct reading should be 'puttock' (a kite), a suggestion first made by Lewis Theobald in 1726 and recalled with approval nearly fifty years ago by S.A. Tannenbaum. Theobald offered 'puttock' as one of three alternatives to Pope's reading of 'peacock'. Theobald's other two suggestions were 'meacock' and 'paddock'. By the time of his edition of Shakespeare (1733), Theobald had abandoned 'puttock', chiefly, one assumes, because he was skeptical that "Jove" (1.277) "stands in the place of his bird,"[2] i.e., the eagle, thereby establishing a neat royal eagle / vicious puttock / aviary dichotomy, even though Theobald himself points out that such a dichotomy exists elsewhere in the canon:

> But what might go a good Way towards supporting a Conjecture that this was our Author's Word here, is. that there is a particular Passage in another of his Plays, where the Eagle and Puttock are placed comparatively, and in a Light of Opposition to one another.
>
> —*Cymbeline*, p. 128

> Cymb. Thou might'st have had the sole Son of my Queen.
> Imog. O blest, that I might not!—I chose an EAGLE,
> And did avoid a PUTTOCK.[3]

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[1] Line references are to the New Arden *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Methuen, 1982).

[2] Lewis Theobald, *Shakespeare Restored* (London, 1726), 93.

[3] Theobald, p. 96.

Tannenbaum, with the paleographical argument which would allow misinterpretation of a secretarial script 'puttock' into 'pajock',[4] went on to cite the passage in *Cymbeline*, and then concluded with an argument against the frequent reading 'peacock' in favor of 'puttock':

> The peacock . . . this beautiful and highly esteemed bird would not have been chosen by Shakespeare as a contrast to Hamlet's father, whom he subsequently identifies with kingly Jove. To provide this contrast Shakespeare must have written 'puttock.' This panic-struck coward who had just staggered out would have been the last one in the world to bring the strutting peacock to anyone's mind. But the craven puttock would have suggested itself at once.[5]

'Puttock' is superiar to peacock', but editors have found 'pajock' to be a legitimate word in itself, albeit one existing nowhere else in the canon. As Harold Jenkins comments with characteristic clarity, 'pajock' is "often supposed to be for 'peacock', but more probably a form of 'patchock', a base contemptible fellow, a savage; in which case pronounce 'padge-ock' rather than 'pay-jock'."[6] Jenkins then in a long note reviews several other suggested readings, including " 'puttock', kite, described by Nares as 'a base kind of hawk. . . used as a name of reproach for a base and contemptible person' . . .,"[7] but finds no alternative so satisfying as 'patchock', a word used by Spenser in *The Present State of Ireland*.[8]

In the midst of this lack of certitude let me provide a puttock from a work Shakespeare is known to have used in the composition of *Hamlet*. a puttock in proximity to diction also present in this section of 3.2, and with a meaning perfectly congruent with the nature of Claudius. Elsewhere[9] I have stressed the importance of Nashe's *Christ's Tears over*

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[4] See S.A. Tannenbaum, *The Shakespeare Association Bulletin*, VII, 127-130.

[5] Tannenbaum, p. 130.

[6] New Arden *Hamlet*, p. 305.

[7] Ibid., p. 510.

[8] Students of this crux may note with interest the intriguing complications presented by part of the gloss on "Patchokes" in *The Spenser Variorum*, Volume 10, where the *NED* is invoked to point out that the word is "Known only in the passage cited; in which the reading is uncertain," and the editor of the volume, Rudolf Gottfried, adds (p. 346) that "the word may be related in Spenser's mind to *puttock:* the beseigers of the House of Alma, who it has been suggested" (by M.M. Gray in *RES* 6. 414-6) "represent the Irish fighters, [thus] described: 'Some like to Puttockes, all in plumes arayd' (F.Q. 2.11.11.5)."

[9] Cf. "*Hamlet* and *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem*," *AJES* 6 (1981) 158-167 and "*Hamlet* and 'Salary,' " *N&Q* 30 (1983), 125-126.

Jerusalem (1593) in Shakespeare's work, especially in *Hamlet.* It will be enough to remind the reader that certain striking words and phrases, some unique in the canon, are found in *Christ's Tears* and *Hamlet*. Among these are: '*beautified*' (9),[10] '*rashly . . . spleanative*' (12-13), '*what is a man*' (29), '*Angels . . . felicity . . .Death* his *Sariant . . . my voice . . . dying*' (32), '*salary*' (148), '*skin-playstring*' (149), '*Nunnery*' (152) as a brothel, '*Hearneshaw*' (172), and '*painted over an inch thicke*' (180).

In the course of his uncharacteristically sober tract Nashe allows Christ in direct address to rebuke Jerusalem and warn the city that "a guilty conscience can no where take rest" (38) and that "the Tyrant . . . first extirpates the adherents of vertue . . . (as) whom slew *Caine* but his just or vertuous brother *Abel*" (40). Christ then points out how willing he was to protect the citizens of Jerusalem, as a hen with her chicks, powerful to fight for them "against the *Puttocke* . . . that slie *Puttocke* sathan . . . careful to warm them "under her soft downe . . . and *watcheth* for them whiles they *sleepe* . . .nothing should have *frighted* you . . ."(43). All this Christ would have done without "respect of persons (for) the Kings blood attainted of conspiracie against mee, is more base then the caytives or peasants" (42). E.A. Armstrong[11] has shown us the associative power of Shakespeare's imagination, so that it is not surprising that Shakespeare, already involved with *Christ's Tears* in the creating of *Hamlet*, where a *Cain* and *Abel* story has been played out, where the king's blood is guilty of conspiracy, where Claudius has been '*frighted*' (3.2.260), where "some must *watch* while some must *sleep*" (3.2.267), where even "a forest of feathers" may have been suggested by the "soft doune," should have applied to the satanic, ever so sly Claudius the easily recognizable term of abuse, 'puttock'. Even the ghost's word accepted for a "*thousand* pound" (3.2.281) has earned a number parallel to Christ's reference to the "*thousand* part of propitiousness" (42).

'Puttock' satisfies the need for an abusive term for Claudius and his nature; it is supported by the parallel antithesis in *Cymbeline*, and by its own presence in the midst of diction otherwise parallel to that surrounding Hamlet's little verse, all from a work which on the basis of still other evidence was of considerable influence upon the composition of *Hamlet*.

'Pajock' is a term unique in the canon and therefore lacks such parallelism and its literary source in Spenser is from a work which we do not know that Shakespeare read (unlike the example of *Christ's Tears over*

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[10] Page references are to *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. R.B. McKerrow (Oxford, 1958 repr.), II.

[11] Edward A. Armstrong, *Shakespeare's Imagination* London, 1946).

Jerusalem). It may be that 'pajock' is correct, but it is by no means certain. Until such time as there is some fresher evidence, perhaps the base 'pajock' may share his probability with the sly and base 'puttock'.

A Critique of Practical *Hamlet:* Post-War Productions of *Hamlet* in Bulgaria

GEORGI TODOROV

The way the producers handle and modify the text in the course of their work on a particular production can be regarded as an implicit criticism of the play. This *practical criticism* (i.e. theatrical practice viewed as criticism) has a special relevance, being direct, productive, theatrically professional, artistically (not academically) motivated, comprehensive, exhaustively detailed, socially representative and statistically processable. It offers an unique opportunity to approach the text from the inside, from an author's perspective, to see it in the making, and as part of a continuous individual and social creative process.

The seven post-war productions of *Hamlet* on the professional stage in Bulgaria supply enough material for such an investigation. Starting immediately after the war with the staging of the play in Bourgas (1945-46) directed by Boris Mihailov and Stefan Karalambov, the productions keep recurring quite regularly till well into the eighties, thus presenting a relevant image of the theatrical practice, both linked with a solid tradition, and open to new ideas.

The declared aim of all the producers is artistic effectiveness in front of their audience, and it is in order to achieve this aim that the dramatical material is being reworked. The way the producers alter the text locates the trends of their de facto dissatisfaction with Shakespeare's play, and can be regarded as a system of practical value judgements. The comparative analysis of prompt-books could provide an objective starting point for an investigation into the artistic status of the classical masterpiece in the face of changing times and cultures. But how is the text actually altered?

Textual additions are *not* made. It is taken for granted that adding text to Shakespeare is not 'allowed', and none of the producers questions the validity of these premises. The rule has no exception, and the only textual 'addition' is in fact a repetition. It occurs in the production of Nikolai Georgiev (in Varna, 1967-68) who, following Jan Kott, wanted to emphasize the parallelism in the fates of Hamlet and Fortinbras. He preserved the usually caduceus scene with the first appearance of the Norwegian prince (4.4), but he still needed more material to draw Fortinbras to the foreground. The impasse was overcome by repeating the first episode of that scene (4.4.1-8) one more time in between acts 2 and 3.

In the same production Georgiev modified stylistically ten lines in the final speech of Fortinbras, keeping the overall meaning of the text, but lending it a more modern ring just before the fall of the curtain. A different approach was used by Leon Daniel, the only other exponent of stylistic modifications, who edited a few words here and there in order to adjust the translation to his taste, using as a reference, as he says, the original, and also the translation of Boris Pasternak in Russian. On the whole such an approach to the text remains isolated.

Another possible textual manipulation is the reordering of pieces of the text, without altering the wording of the passage—either by shifting them to another place, or by putting them in the mouth of another speaker. These artificial procedures are very rarely used. No unit of the text has been shifted regularly, or in a similar way, in more than one production. There is a vague tendency, as it seems, to increase the number of such shiftings, but there is not enough material for meaningful conclusions.

This is not the case with the cuts, which are by far the predominant textual means of reshaping the play. Strangely enough, the same people who are reluctant to add even "some dozen or sixteen lines" if they are not by Shakespeare's hand, feel at ease to subtract some dozen or sixteen hundred lines from what the author has written. The minimal rate is 1205 lines in Vili Tsankov's production in Varna (1956-57), and the maximum is 1642 lines cut by Nedialko Yordanov (in Bourgas, 1979-80).

The accumulative superimposition of the cuts of all the productions upon the full text of *Hamlet* can be regarded as a yes-or-no vote for each textual unit. The result of this vote divides the text into two main classes—viz. the regularly-cut v. the regularly-spared units. As a result 1355 specific lines out of 3911 are voted out by this procedure—34.6% of the text—including 249 lines cut by all the producers.

Thus the text is divided into 'good' and 'bad' lines, according to the imaginary council of producers. The 'good' lines form, demonstrably, a text, which could be the basis for a viable stage production, as a sort of 'average' post-war Bulgarian *Hamlet*. But it is the study of the 'bad' lines, i.e. the cuts made by a majority of the producers, being the result of an active choice and definite intention, that will reveal most clearly the trends in reshaping the play.

The first and most immediate such trend is the simplification and concentration of the dramatical material, working at all levels. Already in the list of Dramatis Personae there are quite a number of absences. Twelve minor characters or functional speakers have been cut: Voltemand and Cornelius, Reynaldo, the King and Queen Players, the Captain of Fortinbras, the two Sailors in 4.4., the Gentleman at the beginning of 4.5., the Danes following Laertes in 4.5., the Lord in the last scene, and the First English Ambassador. All these casualties are dramatically uneffective characters, introduced in order to perform a certain function, and devoid of character of their own.

Equally undramatic are the narrations of actions happening outside Elsinore. Along with the elimination of such narratives, the themes involving faraway countries and places are voted out (the France of Laertes, the Norway and Poland of Fortinbras, the sea and England of Hamlet's death mission). This geographical concentration contributes to the claustrophobic atmosphere of the play, and is closely linked with a simplification of the plot. Centrifugal plot-lines are rejected, such as the mission of Reynaldo, the episode with the pirates, a great part of the Norwegian theme with the plot-line of Fortinbras. The attention is focused even more on the main conflict.

A similar concentration and simplification are observed on the structural level with the elimination of a number of whole scenes or sub-scenes: the Reynaldo sub-scene in 2.1.; the Ambassadors sub-scene in 2.2.; the discourse with the Players at the beginning of 3.2.; the text of the 'Mouse-Trap' play in 3.2. (just the dumb-show is preserved); act 4, scene 4; act 4, scene 6; the Lord's sub-scenelet in 5.2. To these may be added the small introductory and exit-pieces with definite structural functions, occuring at the beginning of 4.1.; 4.2.; 4.3.; 4.5., and also at the end of 4.3.; and 5.2. This simple enumeration reveals a special uneasiness with the staccato structure of act 4.

The rhythm of the play is accelerated by a systematic cutting of dramatically uneffective digressions, such as the thirty regularly-cut lines of the 'Lamord' passage (4.7.). These cuts could be explained by the producers' desire to save time in a notoriously long play, but there is much more than mere quantity involved. Ophelia's songs are 44 lines long and could be easily reduced to two or three quatrains, yet six of the productions have preserved *all* the songs, and the seventh one has kept 33 lines of them. The point is that these songs are 'in' character, and dramatically effective. Much shorter pieces have been cut by all, when they are out of character, as the lines of the Queen (3.4. 120-122); or out of situation as when the Gentleman in 4. 5. 98 bursting in with "Save yourself, my lord," proceeds Homerically:

> The ocean, overpeering of his list,
> Eats not the flats with more impetuous haste.

Thus many a glorious quotation, aphorism, and wise old saw have been discarded for similar reasons, except in Polonius's long advisory speech in 1.3,, where they are 'in' character.

Another group of regularly-cut passages are the topical allusions, with the obvious instance of the conversation about the children's theatres (2.2.), carrying little meaning out of its immediate historical context. Differences in cultural context account also for the elimination of a large number of passages on superstition centered around the Ghost theme.

The character of the Ghost itself is a serious problem with most of the producers. They feel uneasy about such an obsolete conventionality of the revenge tragedy, hardly taken seriously by an audience typical for its disbelief in the supernatural. But the Ghost is so deeply rooted in the play that it cannot be eliminated by any amount of traditional textual manipulation. So all the efforts and ingenuity of the producers have to be applied in order to solve the problem by extra-textual means.

The most plausible solution is to try to transform the spirit of the murdered king into a "coinage" of Hamlet's brain, as Gertrude exclaims in 3.4.139. This was done by Nikolai Georgiev in Varna (1967-68), by Roumen Chakarov in Pleven (1975-76) and by Vili Tsankov in Sofia (1982-83), in spite of the clash with the text, where the reality of the Ghost is especially stressed, as it appears in the initial scene where Hamlet is absent. In Georgiev's version the words of the Ghost are put in the mouth of Hamlet by means of a hidden microphone. Tsankov does the same, without the microphone, but he also offers an alternative 'explanation' of what the Ghost is—a life-size portrait of Hamlet senior, carried in silence by the black guards of Claudius. Here the psychological and the materialistic strategies of solving (or evading) the problem of the Ghost are combined, and this is an illustration of the producer's methodological shortcomings. The most ingenious solution is found in Nedialko Yordanov's production in Bourgas (1979-80), where the Ghost turns out to be Claudius himself in disguise, trying to tempt Hamlet "toward the flood." The explanations behind this innovation are quite interesting, but whatever its intrinsic qualities, the audience fails to understand what is actually happening, as it is textually unsupported.

Yordanov's production is the outstanding example of how by changing the extra-textual context the meaning of the play can be changed quite radically. Here we witness such extratextual actions as Hamlet, sword in hand, speaking his most famous soliloquy in the presence of Ophelia, and threatening to make her quietus on the spot; then Claudius shouting his 'prayer' in the face of Hamlet, while Horatio is spying on the whole scene. Ophelia is now Claudius's mistress, and Osric grows into an omnipotent praetorian chief, who, in one of his numerous wordless actions, puts the crown on his head as an emblematic declaration of his ambitions.

Such devices borrowed from the stylistics of ballet or pantomime are to be found in almost all the productions, whenever the producer wants to add something to the play and lacks textual material to support his idea. Vili Tsankov in Varna (1956-1957) used an almost ballet-like open formal symbolism, his characters being dressed either in black or in white. In Nedialko Yordanov's production all the courtiers were dressed in red, Ophelia in white, Hamlet in black. Leon Daniel (in Sofia, 1964-65) and Vili Tsankov (in Sofia, 1982-83) used a number of hooded guards dressed all in black.

The extra-textual changes and innovations combine with the textual cuts in achieving the aims and strategies of the producers in remodelling the play according to their own visions of it. Regardless of the inevitable differences in approach, method and style, there are some very palpable common trends.

The main common result is the politicization of the main conflict and the polarization of the characters. Hamlet is no longer opposed to a personal villain, but to an evil political system. His speeches on theatrical theory and practice are cut as his mind is even more obsessed with the issues of moral and political corruption. His loneliness in the midst of the court is emphasized. He is the individual against the System.

Correspondingly Claudius is no longer interesting as a villain, and loses some of his prominence. He is now part of the political mechanism.

Fortinbras also joins the System, after losing almost all the textual material which supports his plot-line. The parallelism of his story with that of Hamlet (if it has ever existed, except for the warned scholar) gets lost, and instead of being a "delicate and tender prince" on the side of legitimacy together with Hamlet, he remains just what his name indicates, and becomes part of the triumphant System.

The most prominent feature in the politicization of the play is the creation of the collective character of the Court as a machine for oppression. In Shakespeare the Court is a combination of people quite irrelevant to the main conflict—the impersonal Voltemand and Cornelius, the decorative Attendants, the ridiculous Osric, and the purely functional Lord or Gentleman. Instead, in the modern Bulgarian productions there is a purposeful, disciplined, omnipresent, anonymous and negative political force.

The character of Ophelia, the 'sweet maid' deprived of initiative and will, is unsatisfactory to most of the producers, and there is a definite tendency of 'emancipating' her. Polonius is no longer allowed to say that she seems "Unsifted in such perilous circumstance" (1.3.102), while the line of the dirty songs (4.5.) is clearly emphasized. Her sexuality, from being latent as in Sakespeare, becomes more manifest, mainly by extra-textual means, reaching a point in Nedialko Yordanov's version where during Hamlet's absence in Wittenberg she has become the mistress of Claudius.

All these trends in changing the play are due to a desire, stated explicitly by the producers, to make *Hamlet* theatrically more effective and as relevant as possible to the modern Bulgarian audience. The main point is, as Tsankov puts it, "to create an active spiritual stirring of our contemporary [sensibilities]." There are no academic exercises, no theatrical 'archaeology' involved, but just an attempt to achieve a piece of living theatre, a play with a message in the present tense. Paradoxically such a declared modernization of the play finds some remarkable parallels with the earlier prose versions of the Hamlet myth. In the stories of Francois de Belleforest and Saxo Grammaticus there was no Ghost at all, as the royal fratricide was no secret. While Hamlet's feigned madness was a means to escape death, the Court was collectively on the side of the King, against Hamlet, spying his every step and plotting his death. The character corresponding to Ophelia was a harlot sent by the King in order to seduce Amleth into revealing his secret.

The plot-line of Fortinbras, the episode with the pirates, the mission of Reynaldo, Hamlet's lengthy digressions about the theatre, the text of the 'Mouse-Trap', and in fact *all* caduceus themes and characters do not belong to the original story, and have been grafted to it either by Shakespeare or by the author of the 'Ur-Hamlet'.

The theatre directors in the scope of this study are *not* familiar with the version of Belleforest-Saxo, and there is no attempt at a 'return to the sources' whatsoever. The typological drift towards the original structures of the myth argues that in their effort to be modern and interesting to the present-day audience, the producers are jointly reaching some basic patterns inherent in the very material.

The self-imposed limitations in the producers' work on the play—a ban on all textual additions, and the corresponding usage of 'pantomime' action for conveying innovations—have restricted the ideas from reaching their normal development. Some of the latent trends are palpable even now: getting rid of Fortinbras, transforming the Ghost into something more plausible, emancipating Ophelia etc. But these are only glimpses from beyond the limitations of traditional theatrical practice. Only an eventual methodological drift towards more freedom and fuller responsibility will allow the producers to reach even deeper, and develop more richly the possibilities of this particular structure of an archetypal human situation that goes by the name of *Hamlet*.

REVIEWS

A Review of Periodical Articles (1985-86)

Which of Macbeth's daggers is *Hamlet?* If 'traditional' criticism likes to draw its *Hamlet* in a reassuringly palpable form, 'modern' criticism sees its *Hamlet* as, ineluctably, a dagger of the mind. Each runs up against consequent problems, and piquantly paradoxical ones at that. The former keeps disagreeing about what shape the dagger is, thus casting doubt upon that very palpability which it claims; while the latter, intent upon denying any kind of materiality, misses the real paradox of empiricism, that certainty of non-materiality actually depends upon equal certainty of materiality. Shakespeare, of course, knew all this years ago: Macbeth's "I have thee not, and yet I see thee still" neatly encompasses both sets of paradoxes.

Now this is, to be sure, to demonstrate that over-fondness for easy polarization characteristic of this kind of meta-review. Yet there's something about writing on *Hamlet* that does seem to attract such a pattern. Robert F. Willson, Jr.,[1] for example, begins with the kind of argument which familiarly leads to a fragmented text theory, emphasizing as he does the theatricality of Hamlet. He is player, playwright, director, prompter, audience, performing many different roles in the play, re-writing the script of Claudius's plot by changing the letter to the English king, giving directions to the players. It is being forced to play the role of avenger that is at the root of this: his questioning nature leads him into other theatrical attitudes, the antic, the director of a melodrama and so on. But then Willson's argument shifts to adopt an equally familiar argument for a stable *Hamlet*, the 'changed man' idea. Being sent to England, Willson wittily writes, is like the "rusticating of an acting troupe"; and, although he later performs badly in the graveyard scene by interrupting the burial like a member of the audience jumping onto the stage, his reaction is no pose, but a "genuine outburst of emotion." His "readiness is all" speech shows that he has yielded up his diversity of roles to Providence's script, and in the duel scene he demonstrates an acceptance of a role thrust upon him which recalls the dignity of his father. So a character who threatens to disrupt our certainties finally reaffirms them, the son being a chip of the old block after all.

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[1] Robert F. Willson, Jr., "Hamlet: Man of the Theater," *Cahiers Elisabéthains*, No. 28 (October 1985), 37-44.

Such an interpretation of the Hamlet of the later stages of the play is completely contradicted by Yves Bonnefoy.[2] He argues that Hamlet's "readiness" is not the traditional teaching that the final decision is God's, but Hamlet's use of something close to fatalism in that traditional view of things in order to transform it into an authentic and total fatalism. "In place of the discernment that tries to organize and provide, and does so through awareness of values, he substitutes the welcoming acceptance of things as they come along." This philosophy of pessimism, the world as shapeless and chaotic, contrasts, says Bonnefoy, with the order and potential of "ripeness" in *King Lear*. This interpretation results from Bonnefoy's perception of the play as revealing a division-point of history between an old order which creates a sense of unity governing every relationship with reality (an order represented by old Hamlet) and a new fracturing of that unity. Hamlet is called upon to re-establish the old order, but his desire to do so is checked by a recognition of present disarray and confusion: the old order is just "words, words, words," whereas the new disorder is all around him. Thus Hamlet's true double is actually Claudius, who only pretends to recognize values in which he no longer believes. "*Hamlet* is clearly, deeply, specifically the problematics of a consciousness awakening to a condition that was undreamt of and unimaginable only the day before: a world without structure, truths which henceforth are only partial, contradictory, in competition with one another." The old block has disintegrated.

Read such a view back into the theatricality which is Willson's initial point and you end up with an argument like Johannes Birringer's.[3] *Hamlet* is, indicatively, the first play treated in his examination of the theatricality of Shakespeare's texts (he goes on to look at *Troilus and Cressida* and *King Lear)* in a self-conscious engagement with deconstructive notions of how they might reflect within themselves their own 'play of representation', and so present a "problematic duplicity of performance in and by language that seems to qualify and complicate the relationships between language and action, words and character, style and role." So Hamlet's puns and riddles continually overturn clear distinctions and meanings, thus forming contradictions in which he too becomes involved. When his silence in 1.2 gives way to a highly rhetorical self-defence ("Seems, madam?"), he "performs" his grief while denying that he is only seeming to perform it. We are consequently likely to be suspicious of the credibility of other performances, such as his feigned madness. Hamlet is generally marked by a nervousness of style, shifts of emphasis and rhetorical dramatics, and this "bewildering plurality of voices in Hamlet's performance tends to subvert his claim that he could differentiate between the various disguises and fictional constructs of his identity." This particular mirror held up to nature reflects "ever-changing forms and painted faces." The mirror of realism's claims to stability has, we might say, cracked from side to side. A palpable Hamlet is really the product of the heat-oppressed brain.

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[2] Yves Bynnefoy, "Readiness, Ripeness: *Hamlet, Lear*," *New Literary History*, 17, No. 3 (Spring 1986), 477-91.

[3] Johannes Birringer, "Rhapsodies of Words: 'Trapicality' in Shakespeare's Theater," *New Literary History*, 17, No. 3 (Spring 1986), 493-510.

And those critics who seek to foreclose the play do so out of their own psychological fears and preconceptions. So Jacqueline Rose[4] tracks down the sources of some appropriate interpretations of *Hamlet*, the classic studies by T.S. Eliot and Ernest Jones, and modern ones by André Green and D.W. Winnicott. Let's take the classics. Eliot's famous view of Hamlet as dominated by an emotion in excess of the presented facts is inseparably linked, as his phrase, "the Mona Lisa of literature," gives away, to a notion of femininity: it is a woman, Gertrude, who is the cause of the excess (and hence of the deficiency of the play), and it is a woman who "symbolises its aesthetic failure." The horror of both Hamlet and his father at Gertrude's sexual failing now seems of a piece with Eliot's accusation of her guilt in the aesthetic failure of *Hamlet*, looking rather like Freud's account of the drama of sexual difference in which woman is perceived as a threat to normal adult psychic life. Consequently we can define Eliot's dislike of that which is inexpressible, unmanageable and disruptive of an aesthetic theory which will only allow what can be controlled: "femininity thus becomes the focus for a partly theorised recognition of the psychic and literary disintegration which can erupt at any moment into literary form." Ernest Jones also believes that art must deal with the knowable, the controllable. His psychoanalytical analysis of Hamlet is presented as a solution to the problems of the text: it simplifies, remove the excess which is actually those elements of Shakespeare's play which threaten and undermine the purely rational understanding both critics insist upon. And this disruptive excess is femininity. Rose concludes her study of this series of male critics of *Hamlet* by sharply noting another paradox which could be extended to all criticism that seeks to fix its text, that those critics who thus limit the play keep on coming up against the same problem and so remind us of their own uncertainties.

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[4] Jacqueline Rose, "Hamlet—the *Mona Lisa* of Literature," *Critical Quarterly*, 28, nos. 1 & 2 (Spring & Summer 1986), 35-49.

Our four major essays conveniently sound the gamut of approaches and jostle one another rather tellingly. Willson's elegant clarity looks, it may be, thin beside grittier styles. Conversely, the more probing essays display their own kind of arbitrariness, in small things (Birringer drags the term, "trapicality," out of a Q1 reading in the Mousetrap scene) or in big (Bonnefoy talks easily about historical dividing-points). Nor should we allow our own critics to escape from their own perceptions: if a writer's view encodes her or his (or her or his tradition's) preconceptions, then so does a view which offers to expose those preconceptions. There is no logical reason why an argument that *Hamlet* is a fragmented text should be less the result of arbitrary imposition than one which asserts the contrary. Indeed, the two methods exist symbiotically: like, to return to the beginning, materiality and non-materiality.

In this context, an essay by Michal Kobialka[5] about Polish and English productions of Jerzy Zurek's *After Hamlet* usefully reminds us of the peculiarly changing conditions of the play's materiality. Zurek's play counters the post-war tendency in Poland to see Shakespeare's Fortinbras optimistically as the model of the New Man of an enlightened post-Stalinist era by having him as enmeshed in the destructive forces of *realpolitik* as Hamlet himself. The staging of two 1981 Polish productions emphasized the idea of entrapment, the human being as entangled in "the frame of the system"; while a production the following year at Royal Holloway College, inevitably lacking the immediate Polish political context, sought both to introduce this element and to aim at broader truths which could link the Polish and English experiences. Not for the first time, a Shakespeare play underwent a process of historical change while retaining a very real existence by means of the constant implication of its presence.

The rest is straightforward explication, some useful, some not. Maurice A. Abiteboul[6] takes us through the stages of what he terms the 'minidrama' of Hamlet's relationship with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He defines two stages. The first ("dépit amoureux") charts a progressive falling-off in his image of them: when he greets them warmly, they reply in terms of ceremonious politeness (2.2), and their word-playing exchanges indicate a superficial level of attachment. Because of this, Hamlet turns colder and eventually loses confidence in them. The second stage ("retournement" or 'reversal') shows a complete switch in Hamlet's attitude, culminating in his cynical dismissal of them. But, from their point of view, their fate is undeserved since they are the objects of Claudius's manipulation rather than malign agents: caught between two mighty forces, they are just "médiocres fils de la terre" ("indifferent children of the earth"). There's nothing new here, but it's set out with that admirable French lucidity. Just as well presented, but more illuminating, is Anna K. Nardo's[7] discussion of the pearl in the final scene. Drinking a pearl was not just a sign of luxury (as in the case of Cleopatra recorded by Pliny); but pearls dissolved in acetic liquids were long recognized as cordials, and thus cures for melancholy. Such a belief dates back to oriental treatises, but is referred to in many sixteenth-and seventeenth-century books (e.g. Elyot's *The Castel of Helth* and Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*). That the belief was widespread is clear from its appearance in *Volpone* as one of Lady Politick Wouldbe's cures for the hero. Claudius's act is thus not merely a show of extravagance, but a public demonstration of his concern to cure Hamlet's melancholy (hypocritically concealing the scheming reality). This genuinely adds to our understanding of the incident, and seems highly appropriate for Claudius's character. On a smaller point, William Liston's[8] gloss on 1.3.12-14 passes the same test of consistency. Laertes is telling Ophelia to beware of Hamlet since, as a man matures, especially if he is a prince, his emotions may change. In this context, Liston's suggestion that the "inward service of the mind and soul / Grows wide withal" is in contrast to "as this temple waxes" rings true: as the man's body grows stronger, so the ability of his mind to control the body falls away ("wide"='astray').

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[5] Michal Kobialka, "*After Hamlet*: Two Perspectives," *Theatre Journal*, 38, no. 2 (May 1986), 196-205.

[6] Maurice A. Abiteboul, "Hamlet, Rosencrantz et Guildenstern ou la fin d'une amitie: un minidrame dans La Targedie d'Hamlet," *Cahiers Elisabethains*, no. 28 (October 1985), 45-59).

Two notes by G. Blakemore Evans[9] provide us with nothing new, but do usefully support existing theories. An anonymous "Funerall Ellegye on y^e^ Death of the famous Actor Richard Burbedg," printed from a manuscript in C.M. Ingleby, *Shakespeare: The Man and the Book*

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[7] Anna K. Nardo, " 'Here's to thy health': The Pearl in Hamlet's Wine," *English Language Notes*, 23, no. 2 (December 1985), 36-42.

[8] William Liston, "Laertes' Advice to Ophelia in *Hamlet*, I. iii. 12-14," *College Literature*, 12 (1985), 187-9.

[9] G. Blakemore Evans, Two Notes on *Hamlet:* II.2.357-58; III.1.121-31," *Modern Language Review*, 81, no. 1 (January 1986), 34-6.

(1877-81), speaks of missing "the Atlas of your spheare." The sphere seems clearly to relate to the Globe, and, since Hercules took over Atlas's load while the latter sought the apples of the Hesperides, the idea that the boys carry off the sign of the Globe ("Hercules and his load too," 2.2.358) receives corroboration. Secondly, the moot question of whether "nunnery" (3.1.121) could definitely mean 'brothel' as early as the date of *Hamlet* receives evidence on the positive side from references in Nashe's *Christ's Teares over Jerusalem* (a reference to "cloystred" strumpets several pages before the instance discussed in Harold Jenkins's edition prepares us for taking 'nunnery' in this sense) and in two 1604 works by Middleton, *The Black Book* and *Father Hubbard's Tales* (the latter, which speaks of a "White-Friars nunnery," is strengthened by Dekker's contemporary *Westward Ho* which has a student visit "his Nun" in the same disreputable area of London).

Two further notes do not have much point to them. David Everett Blythe[10] comments that, when Hamlet says that he will know his course if Claudius but "blench" (2.2.593), it is more appropriate for Hamlet's surveillance of his uncle's looks that we read the verb as meaning "glance away" than as meaning "flinch." But the words "blench" and "blink" are, in any case, semantically and, probably, etymologically related (see *OED*, where "blench" v.^{1} 6 uses "flinch" to define eye-movement, and, conversely, "flinch" v.^{1} 3b is defined as "blench"). An actor, after all, is unlikely to do one without the other. Charles Turek[11] argues that, since Horatio's list of events he will unfold refers mostly to specific deeds of which Hamlet has informed him, we should search for a place where Hamlet tells him of "accidental judgements, casual slaughters" (which must refer to the killing of Polonius). Turek concludes that Hamlet's "So much for this" at the beginning of 5.2 must refer to the death of Polonius. This is to make much of a simple indicator of a mid-conversation entry, and Turek's explanation for the plural nouns, that they are plural because the others in the list are plural, seems rather feeble beside the obvious alternative that they are plural because Horatio is referring to more than one event (i.e. the deaths of Laertes and Gertrude).

In conclusion, a potentially important textual comment comes from G.R. Hibbard.[12] The idea that F depends to an extent on Q^2 has been generally accepted since mooted by Alice Walker in 1951; but Hibbard now argues that the evidence from errors and spellings is not decisive. Many of the instances which have been adduced, he claims, admit of other explanations: 'unsual' spellings were quite simply common enough for the various people engaged in the printing process to have used them themselves, and 'common errors' could derive from people making the same very understandable mistake about Shakespeare's intention and so replacing a rare word by a common one (e.g. 'pollax'='pole-ax' would have been an understandable mistake for the rare 'Polacks', even assuming the latter to have been Shakespeare's intention). The telling detail of Hibbard's examples strongly indicates that a necessary connection between the texts cannot be assumed. Even our ability to grasp texts doesn't seem to be that sure; but we all agree that there is a text to be grasped.

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[10] David-Everett Blythe, "Shakespeare's *Hamlet*," *The Explicator*, 44, no. 2 (Winter 1986), 9-10.

[11] Charles Turek, "Shakespeare's *Hamlet*," *The Explicator*, 44, no. 2 (Winter 1986), 8-9.

[12] G.R. Hibbard, "Common Errors and Unusual Spellings in *Hamlet* Q2 and F," *Review of English Studies*, 37, no. 145 (February 1986), 55-61.

W. HUTCHINGS

The latter part of 1985-86 has not been covered in this review. It will be included in the next review which will appear in vol. 9. —Ed.

'Hamlet' Closely Observed. By Martin Dodsworth. With a preface by L.C. Knights. London: The Athlone Press, 1985. Pp. 316. No price given.

Martin Dodsworth, best known as editor of *English*, the journal of the English Association, was a pupil of James Smith; L.C. Knights providing a brief introduction, praises the sense of poetry, sense of the theatre and "the awareness of moral issues" but adds that details of the code of honour that Dodsworth finds central may be challenged by some Renaissance specialists. A 'close reading' combined with the study of this code gives a double aim. Dodsworth thinks William Empson's "Hamlet When New" is "surely the best essay on *Hamlet* ever written" (p. 25)—this is shortly to be reprinted in the collection *Essays on Shakespeare* by Empson, announced by the Cambridge University Press. Empson introduced, as early as 1953, the notion of metatheatre; *Hamlet* was oldfashioned by 1600, and Shakespeare in rewriting it, cunningly emphasized the theatricality, the inexplicable delays, to anticipate criticism. Dodsworth sees the code of honour as a means of restating the Revenge code in more up-to-date terms, but also detects "a kind of fighting" within Hamlet between the code and Hamlet's sense of himself as a mystery—"his reluctance or refusal to name what is in effect for him a vital principle is analagous to the custom whereby what is holy is not to be named or not given its proper name" (p. 67). This does not seem to acknowledge that the holy *cannot* be named: not custom, but sheer necessity silences those who have encountered the numinous.

There is therefore a kind of fighting at the heart of the book itself. The dramatist who had already created the Bastard Falconbridge, Falstaff and Parolles was not likely to take a naive view of honour; but Dodsworth keeps slipping this code over one eye, as if he were an optician conducting a sight-test and asking 'How does it look now?' For anthropology he leans on Julian Pitt-Rivers, for Revenge theory on Eleanor Prosser, even though admitting, "These questions are not likely to be formulated by the conscious mind during the performance of the play" (p. 289).

The paradox of honour—that it aims at noble indifference to the world's opinion whilst fighting for public supremacy in a highly competitive manner—was visible even in the conduct of a Philip Sidney, much more of an Essex. Thus Shakespeare's revision of Kyd's original and bloody thirsty Revenge Play in terms of Elizabethan honour is the very first *Hamlet* in modern dress. Empson brings out the relevance of honour to the final duel in a most satisfactory way, because he himself lived according to this aristocratic code, but I find the total effect of Dodsworth heavy and lumpy. His work begins with a close examination of the Polonius household, the main embodiment of the conventional code; and this is to start off with very minor figures. Twelve other sections follow with such titles as "Hamlet, Body and Soul," "Hamlet's Being," "Hamlet and Ophelia"—where Dodsworth thinks the first encounter depicts Hamlet most sympathetically, whilst in the graveyard "is he, despite himself, obsessed with death? or is he trying to shew himself just how 'noble' his bearing can be?" especially compared with the folk wisdom of the gravediggers. Here emerges the Hamlet of L.C. Knight's *Explorations*, self-righteous, self-indulgent, whose final detachment "belongs to an aristocrat who can knock the manners of an inferior world" (p. 263).

To take honour as the clue to this labyrinthine tragedy is to displace madness, death, song, the numinous; *Hamlet* the play demands not only close observation but close engagement. Why does Hamlet visit the graveyard first on his return? To approach the tomb of his father? (What was William Shakespeare's first visit when each summer he returned from London to Stratford?) What did Gertrude say immediately after Laertes had revealed that the corpse was Ophelia's, as she threw flowers into the grave?

> Sweets to the sweet, farewell,
> I thought thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife. . .

Laertes leaps in after the flowers and Hamlet rushes forward. These lines of Gertrude pass unobserved by Dodsworth. It is the play, not the character which is centred on death—violent death for Shakespeare was the main feature of tragedy, as a glance at any Shakespeare concordance will shew. The last section is the best, where Dodsworth faces the inadequacy of the honour theme, but even here he finds Hamlet "pathetic and appalling" (p. 286).

The book feels as if it had been worked over for a long time and though local observations are sometimes telling, one looks in vain for the spirit in which Keats sat down to read *King Lear*. When discussing the ghost for instance, the first points made are what Dover Wilson thought, and then what Prosser thought. The parts need to be seen in relation to the whole with less pedantry; although there is much useful information here.

M.C. BRADBROOK

Hamlet's Search for Meaning. By Walter N. King. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1982. 180 pp. $17.50.

In the middle of his impressive new study of *Hamlet*, King states that "the intellectual content of great drama consists of significant, interwoven issues that actors and audience must grasp mentally. Such drama also possesses an emotional content . . . that provides an affective counterpart to the intellectual design, and without which human engagement with the intellectual content would be minimal or even nil" (p. 80). *Hamlet* neatly fits this definition of great drama, but the definition also can apply to a new and enlightening work of criticism on great drama. King's work is just such a study. King masterfully grapples with some of the most difficult intellectual issues in the play and clarifies these ideas while at the same time revealing with sensitivity and skill the ambiguous emotions that result in conflicts of thought. This critical study uses the tools provided by twentieth-century theology and psychology to examine the development of Hamlet as a "man who learns something" during the course of the drama. The title character's search for meaning brings him to the place where he believes "that a providential force he calls divinity governs his immediate world and shapes the ends of his and all men's lives" (p. 1). The complexities of this vision are examined in a Christian context, and the resulting discussion simplifies neither action nor character. With conviction and clarity, King explores the ambiguous and shady area between providence and human freedom, freeing the notion of a providential guiding power from twentieth-century ideas of determinism and mechanistic causality. The subtle and shifting intellectual patterns of free will and providence that King traces through the drama lead inevitably to the statements Hamlet makes in the final act and underline the importance of those final perceptions.

In the book's introductory chapter, King suggests that most *Hamlet* criticism in this century that has attempted a comprehensive vision of the play falters at the point where these providential speeches are made. Some critics, even those writing from a Christian perspective, find the play's vision of providence either coldly fatalistic or mechanical. Other critics, including the orthodox Freudians, ignore the religious aspects of the final act altogether. King attempts a comprehensive reading of the play that makes use of such contemporary theologians as Paul Tillich, John Macquarrie, and Nicolai Berdyaev (to support his religious views) and the modern psychologists Erik Erikson and Viktor Frankl (to explore recent insights into human behavior). King's final purpose is unmistakable and convincing—to show that Hamlet's struggle through personal psychological problems toward meaning results in a belief in providence and design that is not fatalistic and allows for freedom to act.

After the introduction of his ideas and a delineation of the intellectual thicket through which he hopes to guide the reader, King offers a reading of the principal lines of thought, action, and emotion that lead to the singular vision of providence that concludes the play. His account of these powerful movements is consistently alive and revealing. King begins with a close reading of the scenes with the ghost and echoes the judgment of critics such as John Dover Wilson and Eleanor Prosser that the ghost's demands create moral problems within the play. King creates a convincing portrait of the ghost as "a self-willed, egotistical feudal lord determined to return evil for evil and accustomed to being obeyed, but now unable to act in his own behalf and obliged to rely on a human agent he is resolved to control, but in actuality cannot" (p. 29). If the ghost is actually the spirit of Hamlet's father, he is still no better, morally speaking, than Claudius. Hamlet finds himself in the position of substituting murderous revenge for justice, according to King, and thus acting out the will of another. This unsavory imperative combines with Hamlet's own psychological flaws to cripple the hero. What makes this idea persuasive is the manner in which King pursues the problems of freedom of action, the playwright's use of the verbs "play," "act" and "show," and the quest for substantive belief throughout the drama, The major soliloquies receive perceptive readings that coalesce into an original and insightful pattern of movement toward the paradoxical combination of human freedom and providential design. Other moments are drawn into this framework as well, such as King's fine discussion of the Player King's speech, which emphasizes the discrepancy between the will to act and the nature of the subsequent actions themselves. In a similar vein, King masterfully presents Claudius, in his great soliloquy, as the spokesman for moral order, purpose, and meaning. The pain of Claudius in his sense of distance from this order reveals its existence with even greater clarity and force.

The intellectual design King traces through the play gains in power as it unfolds, and his view of the final act persuades and moves the reader. The extended passages from the writings of Berdyaev are particularly useful and draw fascinating associations between providence and freedom while dissociating the concept of providence from necessity. These analyses sensibly underline Hamlet's statements about the "divinity that shapes our ends" that come just when he has begun to act with certainty of purpose in sending Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their doom and entering freely into the fencing contest. King's reading of the tragic conclusion reveals a Hamlet who, in accepting the role of providence, has simultaneously broken through to a new freedom. Claudius and Laertes remain trapped as slaves of their own uncontrolled wills and ultimately create their own destruction. The tragic intensity of the final scene comes from our perception that Hamlet's newly won freedom and new perception of order and design have brought him death.

This book is marred, however, in that the psychological explorations are less persuasive than they might be. Unlike the presentation of the existentialist theologians whose ideas and insights subtly and powerfully support and illumine King's central argument, the ideas taken from the psychologists swamp the play and bring out an oddly strident tone from the author. In a chapter entitled "Psychological Motivations," King explores the concepts of personality development advanced by Erik Erikson and the ideas of "logotherapy" devised by Viktor Frankl. Each of these "systems" is given extensive explication before being applied to the play. As a result, the movement of King's primary intellectual argument must halt abruptly while Erikson and Frankl are explained. King seems to acknowledge the problem, for he apologizes to the reader for "what may seem excessive length" in describing Erikson's concept of the identity crisis. Later in the same chapter, an extended discussion of "logotherapy" and a definition of *noögenic neurosis* again interrupt the flow of argument. Insights do result from these analyses, but unlike the excerpts from Tillich, Macquarrie, and Berdyaev (which are integrated smoothly and persuasively into King's argument), the psychological background material never sits comfortably within the context; and a statement such as "Hamlet is suffering from an Oedipal neurosis, from identity confusion that may or may not include neurosis, and from either a noögenic neurosis caused by existential frustration or pronounced spiritual distress verging on a noögenic neurosis" (p. 133), is worth little without the extensive explanatory material. The author then insists on the importance of this presentation by asserting that the new psychological theorizing "can be ignored by literary critics only at the peril of their own critical integrity" (p. 126). He asserts no such exaggerated claim on behalf of the religious philosophers whose ideas make a much more convincing contribution to his argument.

Aside from the psychological obsession that somewhat clouds his study, King makes an important statement on a major idea in the play. For the most part, his analysis is precise and invigorating and his reading sensitive and comprehensive. Anyone who reads this study will never again encounter the "fall of the sparrow" without responding with heart and mind in a new and complex way.

DAVID ALLEN WHITE

Shakespeare's Language, An Interpretation. By N.F. Blake. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd. First edition 1983. Reprinted 1984. Pp. x + 154. No price indicated.

Shakespeare's Division of Experience. By Marilyn French. London: Jonathan Cape, 1982. Pp. 376. Index. £ 12.50 (U.K. price).

Shakespeare's language is a rich mine that has been worked time and again, yet, like other aspects of Shakespeare, never seems to run out. After Simpson's *Shakespearian Punctuation* (1911), Abbott's *Shakespearian Grammar* (1929), Kokeritz's *Shakespeare's Pronunciation* (1953), Mahood's *Shakespeare's Wordplay* (1957), and Hussey's *The Literary Language of Shakespeare* (1982), along with many others, it might appear obvious that the next seam to be opened—if one may be permitted to tear the mining metaphor to tatters—would be Shakespeare's language. Though Professor Blake does have a chapter entitled "Vocabulary," his emphasis falls on the changes in syntactic structures which took place, particularly in the eighteenth century, that have altered our understanding of Shakespeare's meaning. The headings of chapters that deal with this aspect of Shakespeare's language are "The Nominal Group," "The Verbal Group," "Adverbs, Prepositions and Conjunctions," and "Word Order and Sentence Types."

Johnson in *Rambler* No. 168 dealt at some length with changes in linguistic taste that had occurred during the hundred or more years intervening between his own age and that of Shakespeare. The presence of the word "knife" in Lady Macbeth's line "That my keen knife see not the wound it makes" elicited from Dr. Johnson the well known criticism that

> this sentiment is weakened by the name of an instrument used by butchers and cooks in the meanest employment; we do not immediately conceive that any crime of importance is to be committed with a *knife*; or who does not, at last, from the long habit of connecting a knife with sordid offices, feel aversion rather than terror?

Hamlet himself points out to Horatio that "the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier he galls his kibe," and in the opening chapter entitled "Language Environment" we are given an admirably sketched vignette of forms and conventions experimented with by Renaissance writers. Drawing copiously upon *Hamlet*—Polonius's garrulity and the Queen's rebuke ("More matter, with less art"), Hamlet's special interest in "mobled" and Polonius's hearty approval of the word, Hamlet's brief lyric to Ophelia, his apology for its inadequacy, and Polonius's distress at his employment of the word "beautified"—in order to illustrate the age's revival of interest in classical Latin, the coining of new words to keep pace with new areas of knowledge coming into existence (a subject dear to Holofernes), and the predilection of writers for punning and malapropisms, the author's frequent references to *Hamlet* help us recognize afresh how of all of Shakespeare's plays this one fulfils most comprehensively Hamlet's requirement of drama, that it "hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."

Without going in detail into the sociological reasons for semantic and syntactic change, the author gives some striking examples of original significance being lost due to meaning having got eroded over the centuries. In modern usage the second person forms of the personal pronoun, *thou* and *you* have merged so that *you* acts as both singular and plural. But in Shakespeare's time *thou* was the singular form and *you* the plural (cf. the French forms of *tu* and *vous*), the former being the respectful style of address and the latter the familiar. The implications of this distinction can be seen throughout Shakespeare's works, and the examples the author gives are revealing, but the one from *Hamlet* that will particularly interest readers of this journal—Horatio's encounter with the Ghost—explains the latter's resentment towards Horatio:

> BARN.: It would be spoke too.
> MAR.: Question it *Horatio*.
> HOR.: What art thou that vsurp'st this time of night,
> Together with that Faire and Warlike forme
> In which the Maiesty of buried Denmarke
> Did sometimes march: By Heauen I charge thee speake.
> MAR.: It is offended.

(1.1.45-50. All quotations are from *Fl*)

Editors, Professor Blake points out, explain the Ghost's resentment being occasioned by Horatio's use of the word "vsurp'st,"* but this word in Shakespeare's time had not as yet acquired a figurative meaning; in its literal sense (= to seize) it had no pejorative connotation. Quite different, however, was "the impact which *thou* had on a contemporary audience":

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*On making a random check, I confirm Professor Blake's statement. Out of the nine editions I consulted, six explain "vsurp'st" as implying that the Ghost is an invader of the night and an interloper: The New Variorum (ed. H.H. Furness), The Cambridge (ed. John Dover Wilson), The New Swan (ed. Bernard Lott), The Macmillan (ed. Nigel Alexander), The New Penguin (ed. T.J.B. Spencer), and The Arden (ed. Harold Jenkins). The remaining three editions have no gloss: The New Clarendon (ed. George Rylands), The Pelican (ed. Willard Farnham), and The Signet (ed. Edward Hubler).

> To Horatio and to the other characters in the play, the ghost is a spirit which is not human. It is therefore referred to as *it* by all speakers and it is not unnatural that they should address it as *thou* which implies a mixture of both contempt and fear. The spirit is, however, the ghost of the former king. It is naturally offended when it is addressed in a manner reserved for inferior or contemptible mortals, for it cannot throw off the trappings of royalty so easily. Through a linguistic mechanism Shakespeare is able to indicate that the ghost is indeed the spirit of the old king (for no mere demon would be offended by a *thou*) . . . (p. 7).

This is a subtle argument, a good example of the way in which a knowledge of contemporary linguistic forms can provide clues to meaningful interpretation.

In a reverse direction, a modern reader of Shakespeare may mistake the standard form for the colloquial form by going on the assumption that to place a preposition at the end of a relative clause is a sign of the latter (eg, Bertram's "desp'rate creature, / Whome sometime I haue laugh'd with," *All's Well*, 5.3.176-7). But, as Blake points out, in Elizabethan English this was standard form (eg, the Authorised Version's "all this land that I have spoken of," Ex. 32:13), and it was in the 17th century that this usage came to be eschewed, Dryden being a notable example; when he republished his *Essay on Dramatic Poesy* in 1684 he altered the position of all the final prepositions in the 1668 edition: "the age I live in" became "the age in which I live."

Another example of differences in forms of speech prevalent in Shakespeare's age that have disappeared in modern usage is the *do* form. Today *do* is used in negative and interrogative sentences ("I don't think I'll go"; "Do you know where he lives?") and there is no *stylistic* significance—as distinct from *grammatical* correctness—in their function. However, in Shakespeare's age it was often "employed for emphasis," and Professor Blake goes on to elaborate, "The *do* form is often found in more inflated language, as though the circumlocution added more gravity and weight to the utterance." A striking example of this from *Hamlet* occurs in the dialogue between the Player King and Player Queen:

> I do beleeue you. Think what now you speak:
> But what we do determine, oft we breake.
>
> (3.2.181-2)

Other noteworthy examples of this kind of inflated rhetoric are found in the opening scene of *King Lear:*

> Which of you doth loue vs most (1.50)
> I doe inuest you ioyntly (1.129)
> Fiue dayes we do allot thee (1.173)
> When she was deare to vs, we did hold her so (1.196)

Another example of stylistic peculiarity in Shakespeare's time was the easy transition of adjectives into adverbs and vice versa. (It was the eighteenth-century grammarians who insisted that adverbs should be distinguished by the *-ly* ending: slow*ly*, quick*ly*, etc.) Thus when Polonius reflects on his own youthful amours he says,

> I doe know
> When the Bloud burnes, how Prodigall the Soule
> Giues the tongue vowes.
>
> (1.3.115-17)

Here *Prodigall* can be interpreted as an adverb or an adjective. "It may be any soul which gives prodigally or only the prodigal soul which gives" (p. 106).

Within the brief compass of 137 pages ranging over almost all of the plays, Professor Blake has given a bird's eye view of Shakespeare's use of language in the context of his age. Without denying the importance and usefulness of such studies that restore Shakespeare to his historical setting, one is at times uneasy that what we might be left with is an embalmed Shakespeare labelled "Handle With Care." Dr. Johnson of course was aware of the way in which historical changes in language could stifle the works of an older writer, and he points this out in his *Preface to Shakespeare:*

> It is to be lamented that such a writer should want a commentary; that his language should become obsolete, or his sentiments obscure. But it is vain to carry wishes beyond the condition of human things; that which must happen to all, has happened to Shakespeare, by accident and time . . .

If, on the one hand, it can be argued that studies like Professor Blake's, by highlighting the archaic in Shakespeare, render his plays remote from our experience, on the other hand the refutation of this view can be that it is precisely commentaries like the one under review which, by elucidating subtleties of the text otherwise in danger of being lost, prevent Shakespeare's plays from becoming fossils.

In his Introduction the author, understandably in view of his bias for the historical approach to language and literature, deprecates what he calls "the new emotionalism associated with the Romantic Revolution and the new professionalism of criticism developed in America under the banner of the New Criticism" (p. 12) "which in its present form invites a student to respond to a passage of literature without knowing its date, author or critical standing" (p. 13). By the same token Professor Blake approves of the structural approach to language which, on the Continent, "has been widely adopted by critics as a critical tool" (p. 13). Eyeing askance Emily Dickinson's remark, "If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know *that* is poetry," Professor Blake deplores the separation of the language of literature from the criticism of literature. And yet, despite the undisputable logic of his position, one cannot help wondering whether the undiminished power of Shakespearean drama "to shake our disposition / With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls," after the passage of nearly four hundred years, is not an endorsement of what Emily Dickinson said. Dr. Johnson must have the last word:

> Notes are often necessary, but they are necessary evils. Let him, that is yet unacquainted with the powers of Shakespeare, and who desires to feel the highest pleasure that drama can give, read every play from the first scene to the last, with utter negligence of all his commentators. When his fancy is once on the wing, let it not stoop at correction or explanation. When his attention is strongly engaged, let it disdain alike to turn aside to the name of Theobald and Pope. Let him read on through brightness and obscurity, through integrity and corruption; let him preserve his comprehension of the dialogue and his interest in the fable. And when the pleasures of novelty have ceased, let him attempt exactness; and read the commentators

Very different from Blake's insistence on a historical perspective being fundamental for a 'correct' interpretation of Shakespeare is Marilyn French's *Shakespeare's Division of Experience.* If in a certain sense the historical approach is limited, the modern feminist one is by contrast free, wide ranging, untramelled—perhaps more exciting, yet in many ways bespeaking an annihilation of all societal norms of behaviour. Applying its logic to Shakespeare, the author raises questions like, Why should Hamlet feel outraged over Gertrude's yielding to sexual desire? (p. 154), Why should he be so upset over her hasty re-marriage? Though these questions may be the same as the ones asked by T.S. Eliot, French's answers are different.

If the modern feminist stance can regard a quick re-marriage after the death of a partner as *merely* a breach of "social forms" (p. 148), then we are in a different world from the one that Shakespeare inhabits, and though there is nothing to prevent us from interpreting the play in any way we choose, let us not attribute such as interpretation to Shakespeare's intention. A statement like "In this play [*Hamlet*], Shakespeare challenges, examines, probes his own ideals—male legitimacy and female chaste constancy—which, like all ideals, are based on faith rather than knowledge, and finds them shaky and untrue to actual human life" (p. 158) is presumptuous because based on a premise that is modern. Likewise a statement like the following may reflect total emancipation, or total abandonment, depending upon the interpreter: "Haste in remarriage might, in an ordinary way, bother a person who is very conscious of social forms, of ceremony and ritual" (p. 148). Gertrude of course raises the same question with Hamlet, "Why seems it so particular with thee?" To assume that because today quick divorce and rapid re-marriage are ordinary, Shakespeare felt likewise is an imposition upon his sensibilities. Today some of us may not feel particularly outraged by the situation Iago describes, "Or to lie naked with her friend in bed / An hour or more, not meaning any harm." But Othello *is* outraged and, presumably, Shakespeare expected his audience to feel so too. In today's permissive society the question raised recently by an undergraduate student during a class discussion on *Othello*—"What's all the fuss about? Why doesn't he divorce her?"—is neither flippant nor facetious but a genuine inability to 'see' the anguish in Othello's "But yet the pity of it, Iago! O Iago, the pity of it, Iago!"

Being based on assumptions that go under the rubric of "Feminist Criticism," Marilyn French's book seems to this reviewer at least as an attempt to steer Shakespeare in the direction her critical tenets dictate while, in the process, shutting her eyes to much else that is going on in the plays.

The thesis underlying her book is that literature, like myth, best reflects the popular belief through the ages that

> the masculine principle, predicated on the ability to kill, is the pole of power-in-the-world. It is associated with prowess and ownership, with physical courage, assertiveness, authority, independence . . . . It claims to be able to define and administer justice . . . (p. 21).

As regards the feminine principle French sees this as possessing a dual aspect through history. On the one hand it is regarded as creative, it brings forth new life, but at the same time it is expected to be subservient, virtuous, obedient. The dichotomy between the two principles manifests itself in two different directions: men are expected to be aggressive, authoritarian, tyrannical; women: tender, nurturing, compassionate. All this, of course, is familiar ground and Ms. French, with commendable economy of language, covers it within the first forty pages. The nub of her thesis, as suggested in the title of the book, is that

> Shakespeare began his career with profound respect for "masculine" qualities and profound suspicion of "feminine" ones. In very short span—by the time he wrote *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*—he had come to admire "feminine" qualities. By the end of his career, he had come to fear and deplore the power and capriciousness of the masculine principle, and to idealize certain aspects of the feminine. Nevertheless, he never abandoned belief in male legitimacy or horror at female sexuality . . . . This book is a study of the gender principles as I see them existing in Shakespeare's work. I did not bring my theory to the work; rather, the work of Shakespeare . . . brought me to see as I do. (p. 17).

This is an interesting and sharply defined formula, but the concluding sentence contains a tall claim, one that every author believes about his or her own work. We see what we want to see, while stressing our absolute objectivity. Olivia's corrective to Malvolio should be taken to heart by all of us:

> Oh, you are sick of self-love, Malvolio, and taste with a distempered appetite. To be generous, guiltless, and of free disposition is to take those things for bird bolts that you deem cannon bullets.

Since the theory requires that female sexuality should be eyed askance by the male sex, French accuses Shakespeare's men of making sweeping generalizations:

> When a woman performs an unacceptable action—notably, fail [sic] in chaste constancy—blame is almost always extended to *all women.*

> Hamlet does not just blame Gertrude; he assaults Ophelia as well, and cries out "Frailty, thy name is woman."
>
> (p. 130. Italics in original)

Marilyn French, I have no doubt, knows her Shakespeare too well not to recall that Emilia in *Othello* makes the same kind of generalization about *all men:*

> 'Tis not a year or two shows us a man.
> They are all but stomachs and we all but food.
> They eat us hungerly, and when they are full
> They belch us.

And Rosalind, in lighter vein, expresses the same sentiment: "No, no, Orlando. Men are April when they woo, December when they wed."

Likewise, the theory requires that all prostitutes be branded by men as corrupters and defilers, and so French assures us that "prostitutes, who lack this virtue [i.e. chastity], are seen as subhuman, entitled to no human rights, no human respect" (p. 130), forgetting that it is to the Hostess (Doll Tearsheet being present) that Shakespeare gives the moving tribute to Falstaff: "Well, fare thee well. I have known thee these twenty-nine years come peascod time, but an honester and truer-hearted man—Well, fare thee well."

In her section on *Hamlet*, concerning which readers of this journal will be specially interested, French falls into the same kind of error, that of turning a Nelson's eye to certain parts of the text which might clash with the theory. Thus, when she argues that it is Laertes who attaches great importance to ceremony, not Hamlet—except in the matter of his mother's hasty remarriage (p. 148)—she overlooks Hamlet's lines to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: "Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands. Come then. The appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony. Let me comply with you in this garb." Again, when French, like G. Wilson Knight whom she often quotes, says that "Claudius is a good ruler; he loves his wife and is patient and kind with her difficult son" (p. 149), she fails to recognize Claudius's betrayal of Gertrude when her life is at stake. "Gertrude, do not drink," is all that Claudius says; he does not add, as he does *aside*, "it is the poisoned cup." T.J.B. Spencer's comment on these lines is telling: "at this sudden turn of events the King, for all his usual skill and promptitude, cannot summon the energy to face the peril of abandoning the plot by saving his Queen" (ed. *Hamlet*, Harmondsworth: New Penguin Shakespeare, 1980, p. 355).

One final example from *Hamlet:* in her anxiety to establish the Oedipus obsession in Hamlet, French argues that

> the scene with Gertrude [3.4] is, on one level of the play, the climax. After Hamlet has persuaded his mother to refrain from Claudius' bed, he becomes a somewhat different person. He is openly flip and derisive to Claudius, which he has not been before.
>
> (p. 155)

This of course is patently wrong. Hamlet's opening lines to Claudius are flip and derisive: "Not so, my lord, I am too much in the sun," and again, just before the commencement of *The Murder of Gonzago*,

> *King.* How fares our cousin Hamlet?
>
> *Ham.* Excellent, i'faith, of the chameleon's dish. I eat the air, promise-crammed. You cannot feed capons so.

It is not difficult to see why French fails to take cognizance of those parts of the text that contradict her theory with reference to *Hamlet*. Of all Shakespeare's plays—perhaps of all literary works—*Hamlet* is the least amenable to a demonstration of a particular concept, and here lies the problem with her handling of the play. For French, Hamlet's great worry is the repulsiveness of female sexuality. (Note: for French, the *haste* with which Gertrude remarries, or the fact that it is Ophelia who *first* breaks off relations with Hamlet by repulsing his letters and returning his gifts in accordance with her father's orders, are not worthy of consideration—for obvious reasons.) Since, according to French, male expectancy is total female chastity, Hamlet's refusal to see women as being first of all human beings is in accordance with the overall framework of *Shakespeare's Division of Experience*. If Hamlet's obsession is the preservation of female chastity, then "the linear plot—Hamlet's bond to avenge his father—is irrelevant to his real priorities. Thus, his path is blocked, his paralysis is real—he is uninterested in doing what he thinks he should do" (p. 157).

If, then, it seems as though French is simply giving us a re-write of Ernest Jones, such a supposition is not totally erroneous as far as *Hamlet* is concerned, though her treatment of this play does display some fresh insight. For example, consider the following:

> On the mythic level, the dead King and his loving wife are the idyllic creations of childhood; the murderous King and his ardent wife are the parents the young man returns to discover after years spent away

> at school. The disguise convention that permits Hero to die and be resurrected is here internalized and reversed: the play opens after both funeral and wedding. The old King and his wife have died and have been resurrected in Claudius and Gertrude.
>
> (p. 157)

This is well thought out, and one could wish that French were not so committed to her theory so as to have more of these.

Having identified what she finds to be the two outstanding principles in Shakespeare's work, French goes on to illustrate the manifestations of "power," the male principle, in the first tetralogy; marriage and property in *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; and the manifestations of constancy, or feeling, the female principle, in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; money in *The Merchant of Venice* where "Portia is described merely as a way of acquiring wealth" (p. 101). Portia, a representative of the female principle based on feeling, chooses Bassanio who is a "failure," but "that is his main virtue" (p. 102). (French 'forgets' that Portia believes Bassanio is rolling in wealth; she doesn't know he's an impecunious fortune hunter whose fiscal plumes are borrowed from Antonio.) For French, Portia's satiric sketches of her suitors are a critique of the mercantile world that is male dominated. The crux of French's treatment of this play is seen in her interpretation of Portia's role in the trial scene:

> The world of Belmont is shown as graceful and harmonious; one of its main characteristics is moral flexibility. It may seem paradoxical that the dimension of experience concerned with morality—as opposed to law—should also be morally flexible, but a true morality is one which is rooted in human needs and desires, and attempts to contain them within a balance so that people may breathe freely, and yet live with each other. Moral law, on the other hand, is a fixed code that is imposed on people from outside. Moral flexibility means mercy (not justice), compassion (not judgment) . . .
>
> (p. 103)

This is skillfully presented but, like many of French's conclusions, raises disturbing questions. If "moral flexibility" is commendable, why should not murder or incest be justifiable if "human needs and desires" are thereby fulfilled? (Interestingly enough, in her examination of *Pericles*, Ms. French is *not* sympathetic towards Antiochus. "In father-daughter incest, the male is invariably the instigator . . . . Thus father-daughter incest combines abuse of power with sexual abuse and is a prime symbol for misuse of both gender principles" p. 293.) A religious cult belonging to the Children of God movement in the Phillipines preaches a doctrine encouraging sexual freedom, including incest. Recently the Government issued a directive banning the cult from all school and college campuses. The association of moral law with the male principle, and feeling and compassion with the female, forces French to not only adopt an inconsistent position but to almost completely ignore Shylock. Portia may invoke mercy, not justice, and extort it from Shylock by a clever technicality, but surely French is aware of a whole school of criticism that sees in Shylock a man more sinned against than sinning, a man driven to revenge by the inhumanity of his fellowmen whose most eloquent spokes(wo)man is Portia.

If the author's analysis of *Hamlet* and *The Merchant* seem to me to be flawed because too dominated by her theory, her treatment of the Romances is persuasive. Here her thesis stands on firmer ground, *The Winter's Tale* best exemplifying it. The male principle at the play's beginning is seen in Leontes's destructive sexual jealousy, his "identification of women with sex and the sense of sex as sin" (p. 309). Hermione's return to life and the discovery of Perdita's true status are manifestations of the powerful female principle that Shakespeare celebrates in his last plays.

Marilyn French's book is indeed "stimulating," as the blurb on the jacket informs us, and her style carries the argument rapidly along. That the book raises more questions than it answers goes to her credit. After reading her book I find myself asking: Is her assumption that throughout the ages women have been the subservient sex really true, or only apparently so? Perhaps Woman in her infinite wisdom has purposely assumed such a role in order to have intrinsic control over Man. (Cf. Milton's Eve who induces Adam to fall with her since she can't bear the thought of a substitute Eve.) To some of us it may be quite clear that the virtuous woman of the last chapter of Proverbs (to whom French alludes disdainfully) is the controlling power both within the household and without. Likewise *The Taming of the Shrew* can be seen as an elaborate hoax perpetrated upon gullible Man (specifically, Christopher Sly who's come round to believing he's a lord) to cajole him into thinking he's the lord and master and Woman his subordinate. Viewed in this light the 'subjugation' of Kate is heavily ironic.

We may agree with Marilyn French's dismissal of the argument that woman is closer to Nature than Man because she is the child bearer, but if we believe that Nature's great purpose is procreation and the Woman is the primary vehicle for the achievement of this end (since the father may be dead long before the child is born), it would be difficult to deny that, by the same logic, upon the woman devolves the task of ensuring that she make herself sufficiently desirable for the Man so that conception can take place. (Even Hamlet grudgingly concedes that conception may be a blessing.) To this end Woman through the ages has *assumed* a subordinate role. For procreation, the man must experience desire, but not necessarily the woman. In Shakespeare's time artificial insemination and test-tube babies were unknown. Marilyn French's book gives us a lively modern reading of Shakespeare. How far it is a 'correct' reading of Shakespeare's meaning in the context of his age is a different matter.

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